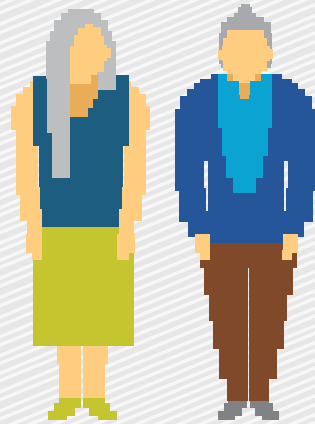


SENIORS

## WHO WE SPOKE TO?

Respondents in this category consisted of 10 seniors aged 65 and above. Seven of the seniors are retirees, two hold full time jobs and one had a part time job. They are all married with children.

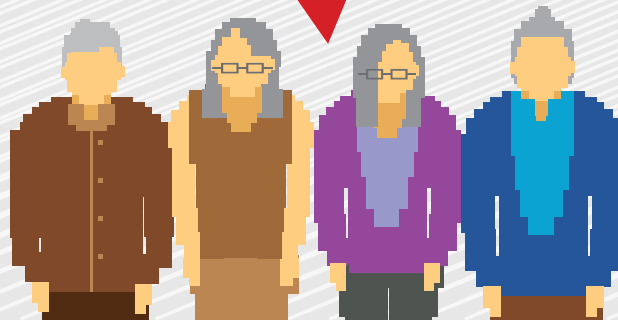


Please refer to Appendix D for a detailed list of respondents in this category.

## THEIR PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE ARTS

### SENIORS ASSOCIATED THE ARTS WITH CONVENTIONAL GENRES

Respondents in this category associated the arts with conventional genres such as the performing, visual and literary arts. Performing arts had greatest recall amongst the respondents as it was mentioned the most. However, the examples cited include student plays, architecture, film-making and cooking and baking in addition to the art forms under the purview of the National Arts Council. This indicates that seniors had a broad definition of what constitutes 'art'.



“ How about those who are student performances? The plays (and) all that. ”

Teo Tse Tau,  
67, Retiree

“ If you're talking about definition, you have to talk about the performing arts – your music, your dance, your play. Then you have visual arts – the paintings, photography, maybe even architecture, you know? Even film-making also is an art. ”

Ng Yew Kang,  
74, Retiree

“ Art, I think is very multi-faceted. Somebody arrange some pieces of material, they create it, people appreciate it, become an art, piece of art... Something of intrinsic value and something that (you) appreciate. ”

Teoh Keh Lye,  
67, Retiree

“ Everything in our lives actually has something to do with art. Even on a daily basis, cooking and baking is an art. There's science involved also but it is also an art. ”

Shirley Yuen, 65,  
Retail Manager

“ Arts (are) abstract. Very abstract. So usually when they say arts, oh you think art painting or gallery. ”

Halimah  
Mohamed,  
65, Retiree

“ Performances, singing and art as in drawing too. And skits, plays. ”

Tien Mei Lin, 65,  
Part time school teacher

Interestingly, respondents in this category noted a distinction between 'high art' and 'low art', where high art is thought to be a highbrow activity where only a small group of people in society were able to appreciate it. In addition, seniors also believed that for the arts to exist, an audience is needed.

“ I think we need to also define at what level you call art, what level you don't call art... So we talk about arts, we want to know whether (it's) confine to the very high level , you know the high brow type of thing... If you talk about ballet for example, symphony orchestra; only a small group of people appreciates.”

Ng Yew Kang,  
74, Retiree

“ In order to qualify art, you must have a creator and an audience, someone that appreciate it. If you don't have these two, you cannot say anything is an art.”

Teo Tse Tau,  
67, Retiree

## **SENIORS SAW THE POTENTIAL OF THE ARTS IN DOCUMENTING THEIR STORIES AND IDENTITIES**

Many respondents in this category were nostalgic about the past and shared their fears of losing their identities and relevance in a rapidly changing Singapore. The seniors recalled arts performances they saw when they were young – ranging from street opera to traditional getai (a form of stage performance held during the Chinese Hungry Ghost Festival in the seventh month of the lunar calendar) and Malay weddings. There was a sense of sadness that such art forms had since declined. Seniors felt that such art forms are an asset to their identities, and should not be forgotten as the nation progresses.



“ You know the wayang for example, when I was a kid, built on the banks of the Sungei River... During those days, the old lady – seventy-five years old, eighty years old – she will drag the crate to position it (at) the wayang, the Hokkien wayang, the Teochew wayang. She chopped the place with the crate and then despite the fact that she (had) lotus feet, she'll crawl (to) Jalan Besar, and she'll spend night after night for three, four nights in a row. But over the years, this art form just declined. And it's pitiful to see some of them now performing in Tiong Bahru, nobody bothers to watch. ”

“ (Our) identity is like evolving... (getai) is actually identity. Yeah, that's part of our identity. ”

Shirley Yuen, 65,  
Retail Manager

“ As we progress as a nation, we should not forget our own indigenous culture. This is part of our asset, which we can claim, you know. ”

Ng Yew Kang,  
74, Retiree

Patrick Low,  
72, Retiree

“ It (getai) goes back to our history, to pre sixty-five. To the fifties, or even to the forties. ”

Patrick Low  
72, Retiree

**AMONGST THE VARIED  
BENEFITS THE ARTS ARE  
BELIEVED TO HAVE,  
IMPROVING WELL-BEING AND  
OUTLOOK TO LIFE RESONATED  
THE MOST WITH SENIORS**

Seniors believed that being involved in the arts possessed numerous positive outcomes. Of the benefits cited by the seniors, most respondents felt strongly that the arts had therapeutic effects in improving one's mental health and happiness. The other benefits that seniors cited included opportunities for bonding as a family, character building and creativity as values that the arts bring and pride in seeing their grandchildren pick up soft skills through the arts.



## THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF ART

“ I think art is a good therapy. Those people who are in depression, like my friend, she took to art. It took her three years to overcome the death of her son. And it's through art that she learned to look at things more positively. ”

Tien Mei Lin, 65,  
Part time school teacher

“ I've self-taught the keyboard, organ, now I learn Eru. And you know, all these are de-stress. ”

Teo Tse Tau,  
67, Retiree

“ Taking up the arts gives you a good relaxation, and makes you happier. Healthier, mentally healthier. ”

Ng Yew Kang,  
74, Retiree

# CHARACTER BUILDING AND CREATIVITY

“ It brings up the values and the character of the person... I would encourage my son, my grandchildren or even my children to say yea, go for it. Do it. Because in the process, (it) will enrich the person. ”

Teoh Keh Lye,  
67, Retiree

“ One of my students who (is) involved in those musicals, those bands, to me they are better behaved. They are more open compared to those who are not. ”

Joe Fong, 65,  
ITE lecturer

“ We send (our granddaughters) to art school. And from not being able to draw well, (now) as soon as they come down they'll be drawing. My husband will always get a paper from the grand daughter, you know, they sketch a lot (together). ”

Tien Mei Lin, 65,  
Part time school teacher

“ ...creativity or imagination, that's the closest association to arts. Along the way, the other attributes come forth. ”

Teoh Keh Lye,  
67, Retiree

## **BARRIERS TO THE ARTS**

Although seniors recognised the values of the arts, they identified two main barriers to being more involved with the arts: growing up in a pragmatic society and peer influence.

## THEY WERE BROUGHT UP IN A TIME OF NATION BUILDING, WHERE THE EMPHASIS WAS ABOUT FEEDING THEIR STOMACHS

The seniors were brought up by parents in a time of nation building where everyone was struggling to make ends meet, and very few people could spare the time and/or money to be involved in the arts. Thus, this built a generation of people who were less interested and consequently, less involved in the arts. There was also an entrenched view that one could not make a living from a career in the arts.

It was also noted that there were views by the seniors that times have changed and there were enlightened parents of today's generation who had a less practical mindset.

“ I think (it) used to be, you cannot make money. Go into arts, you won't be able to earn a living. ”

Tien Mei Lin,  
65, Part time  
school teacher

“ This to me, this is a progression of our parents' time. When they need to struggle for the daily necessities... what art (are you) talking about, (it's about) my stomach first. So even if it's the Mona Lisa the painting... I don't think my father has the time to go and see even if you say free of charge. ”

Teoh Keh Lye,  
67, Retiree

“ Nowadays, the thinking is different already. If you want to be an artist, your parents will say go ahead. Last time it's different. ”

Halimah Mohamed,  
65, Retiree



## A LACK OF INTEREST IN THE ARTS SHOWN BY PEOPLE AROUND THEM

As a result of the way seniors were brought up in Singapore and the resulting generation of people who were less interested in the arts, those who enjoyed attending arts events experienced difficulty in finding the right company. This had the consequence of discouraging seniors from attending arts events and activities.

“ My question (is also about) interest...right now I go to Singapore Chinese Orchestra, my wife (says): 'huh... Why you go?' She (doesn't) have interest. ”

Teo Tse Tau,  
67, Retiree

# HOW DO WE MAKE ARTS MORE RELEVANT IN THEIR LIVES?

Two key learnings were derived and developed into two different ways we could engage the seniors.

There is a general sense of nostalgia amongst the seniors over the types of art forms they consumed in the past. They feel that the arts are an asset to our identity and should not be forgotten as the nation progresses. By sharing the idea that arts document their stories and identities, this would give art a bigger role in the lives of seniors – that it is not just a performance, but a legacy in the form of culture. We could encourage seniors to contribute back to society by sharing their stories.



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What we could tell the seniors:

**The arts bridge our culture, past and present.**

Seniors believe that being involved in the arts can make one mentally healthier and happier. It is also a form of therapy and helps them look at things more positively. The following is a message that we could use to encourage them seniors to be more involved in the arts and enrich their lives.

What we could tell the seniors:

**The arts improve your well-being and outlook to life.**



The seniors get their information mainly from traditional media sources. Eight out of ten seniors said they read the papers and watch television programmes regularly. Entertainment and variety programmes, such as The Noose on the English Channel 5, were mentioned as shows they watched.

In addition, six out of ten seniors said they also used Facebook.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ARTS?

The seniors believed that the arts should be a shared responsibility between the government and the people.

“ To me, it start(s) with the family. Because if the family is shut off from that, nothing the ministry or the government (can do) will drag it out. ”

Teoh Keh Iye,  
67, Retiree

“ Individual,  
People, Parents. ”

Teo Tse Tau,  
67, Retiree

“ I think the government should provide the amenities. The finances, the guidance, the health, the money, so on. And of course, the family, everybody will play a part. ”

Ng Yew Kang,  
74, Retiree