

Smart women, rich men, no kids: couples' arts engagement in Italy

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This research was conducted by **Elizabetta Lazzaro and Carlofilippo Frateschi** at **HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, Netherlands and University of Padua, Italy**

Summary

This paper explored how much the arts occupied the time of couples, both separately and together. The analysis took in both attending arts events (e.g. going to the cinema, concerts, museums or excursions to historic sites) and participating in the arts (e.g. singing, writing, taking photographs). The important determinants of couples' arts engagement – either separately or together – included level of education, employment, and health. The education level of women was particularly significant, with well-educated women having a strong, positive influence over the couples' engagement with the arts. Also significant was whether the man was in paid work, which also had a positive effect on arts engagement, possibly due to increased disposable income available for the couple.

The paper is based on the Italian national 'Use of Free Time' survey

This study surveyed approx. 21,000 households (including approx. 15,000 heterosexual married or cohabiting couples) between April 2002 and March 2003. Unsurprisingly, couples' arts engagement spiked at weekends. However, many of the other observations might well be rooted in the specifics of gender relations in Italy (especially the striking gender inequalities in the amount of paid and unpaid work undertaken by each partner in a given couple).

The impact of children was unexpected

The findings of this study run rather contrary to received wisdom and research on the subject elsewhere in Europe. In Italy (according to this study), the age at which children have a negative impact on the parent's arts engagement is not babies or very small children (as it is in the Netherlands, for instance), but rather young children and teenagers.

This summary is by **Philip Abraham, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

gender **Italy** **engagement** **couples** **survey**

Title	Couples' arts participation: assessing individual and joint time use
Author(s)	Lazzaro, E. & Frateschi, C.
Publication date	2015
Source	Journal of Cultural Economics, online
Link	http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10824-015-9264-3
Open Access Link	http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10824-015-9264-3

By **Culture.Case** | 16 June 2016 | **Consumer behaviour in arts and culture**
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