

PRESS RELEASE

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Museums and Galleries – Britain’s Untapped Wellbeing Resource?

“Actively investing 30 minutes a day to do something that makes us feel good is beneficial to our wellbeing” – Professor Paul Dolan

- Half (53%) of people in the UK felt some level of anxiety yesterday, while 40% have felt anxious at least some of the time
- A quarter (27%) feel guilty about taking time out for themselves
- 3 in 5 adults (57%) do not make conscious choices to give their life meaning
- 72% of who regularly make time for a hobby feel satisfied with life overall – compared with only 2 in 5 (45%) who don’t

Taking just 30 minutes out of our daily lives for leisure activities could be the key to improved wellbeing, according to behavioural scientist Paul Dolan in ‘Calm and Collected’, a report published today by Art Fund. Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art and the organisation behind the National Art Pass.

Their study of the nation’s wellbeing found that people in Britain are neglecting their own happiness, facing unprecedented levels of anxiety over issues such as work, finances and future aspirations. A ‘wellbeing allowance’ of 30 minutes spent each day engaging in activities such as visiting a museum or gallery, it concluded, can contribute to a greater sense of personal purpose and reduce feelings of anxiety.

The report includes results from a survey of over 2,500 UK adults which revealed that over half (53%) of people in the UK felt some level of anxiety, while 40% feel anxious at least some of the time. Worryingly, nearly a third (32%) of respondents believe they are ‘passengers in their own lives’ – indicating a population losing control over its wellbeing. However, anxiety levels vary significantly by region, with people in greater London the most likely to experience anxiety at 45%, according to the study.

A new trend of ‘triple shifting’ – the phenomenon of juggling work, home and busy social lives – often means people neglect taking time for self-reflection. And when they do, over a quarter (27%) of adults admit to feeling guilty about devoting time to themselves.

Paul Dolan, professor of behavioural science at the London School of Economics, said: "Art Fund's study highlights two vital areas that impact our happiness – time and stress. Taking the time to relieve everyday stress and anxiety is crucial for wellbeing. While most of us have the time, we simply don't take it. This is a symptom of the pace of the modern world that we live in, but any activity that helps us take a break is a good thing and something everyone should do more of. Taking just 30 minutes a day for a leisure activity can work wonders in helping manage the stresses of modern life."

Over two thirds of the study's respondents (67%) agree that taking time out for leisure activities is good for personal wellbeing. Despite this, nearly 3 in 5 adults (57%) do not make deliberate choices that can affect wellbeing and sense of purpose.

The 'Calm and Collected' report revealed a clear correlation between frequency of cultural pursuits and wellbeing. When examining those who have ever visited a museum or gallery, 51% say they would like to visit them more regularly – and 63% say they have at some point done so specifically to 'de-stress' – however only 6% actually visit at least once a month.

Stephen Deuchar, director of Art Fund, said: "We've always believed that art can help people see, think and feel differently. So we thought we should commission some proper research to investigate how regularly engaging with museums and galleries can contribute to an individual's sense of wellbeing.

"The outcomes of the 'Calm and Collected' research clearly confirm that visiting museums more frequently does indeed have a positive effect on one's overall sense of personal balance and fulfilment. While we know that finding the time to visit amidst an increasingly busy existence is easier said than done, it is heartening to find that Art Fund's belief in the UK's national art collections as potential sources of inspiration and uplift is reflected in the study."

Art Fund is championing wellbeing through an inspiring call to action for people to choose themselves by taking back time to do what really matters to them and to consider the benefit of museums and galleries as a great option. With a National Art Pass, members enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions.

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Notes to Editors:

About Art Fund:

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 139,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by Tate St Ives in 2018) and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org

Research methodology:

The Calm and Collected report was conducted by delineate, a strategic insights firm, and their sister company opinion.life, an international market research company. The research included both a quantitative survey and a qualitative social study.

Quantitative phase

- An online survey was conducted among a nationally representative sample of 2,521 UK adults in August 2018.
- Respondents were selected from online consumer panels and invited to complete the online survey by mobile or computer.
- Respondents were eligible on the basis of age and region, with representative quotas set according to published statistics for each country.
- The Margin of Error for a sample of n=2,521 is +/- 1.9 % at the 95% confidence level

Qualitative social study

- A total of N respondents participated in a four-week diary study
- During this time N ('test' sample) were invited to visit a museum or gallery at least once a week, while the remainder ('control sample') continued with life as normal
- Respondents also participated in regular in-depth interviews, and completed questionnaires and diaries of their activities