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## Cultural Practices of Ukrainian Youth at the Time of the Russo-Ukrainian War (Based on Data of the UCF Online Survey)

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The article examines the peculiarities of cultural practices among Ukrainian youth during a full-scale war. The research identified the most popular cultural practices of Ukrainian youth. It revealed the obstacles that prevent young people from attending cultural events more frequently. Special attention was given to identify the most desired cultural services. Based on the respondents' answers, a matrix of cultural needs satisfaction was formed, which established a zone of cultural needs deficit. This zone represents those needs that have the highest demand among young people but remain unsatisfied. It includes festivals, cultural-historical tours, comedy concerts, evenings, exhibitions of artworks and public lectures. The study also revealed the specifics of consuming online cultural products among young people and the level of demands for cultural events of this format. It was also found that almost every fourth young Ukrainian is currently involved in volunteer projects in the cultural sphere. However, nearly half of the surveyed youth do not participate in such events but express a desire to get involved. This indicates that young people demand participation in volunteer cultural projects. Therefore, it is essential to involve youth as a significant agent of social change in various initiatives to reconstruct and develop Ukrainian culture.

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**Key words:** cultural practices, leisure, Ukrainian youth, the Russo-Ukrainian war, online survey.

**Кожекіна Людмила, Самчук Тарас, Серета Олексій. Культурні практики української молоді в часи російсько-української війни (за даними онлайн-опитування УКФ). У статті досліджено особливості культурних практик української молоді в умовах повномасштабної війни. У результаті проведеного дослі-**

дження визначено найбільш популярні культурні практики серед української молоді. З'ясовано, які ж саме перешкоди заважають молоді частіше відвідувати культурні заходи. Окрему увагу приділено виявленню найбільш бажаних культурних послуг. На основі відповідей респондентів сформовано матрицю задоволеності культурних потреб, де встановлено зону дефіциту культурних потреб, тобто тих, на які є найбільший попит серед молоді, але вони не є задоволеними. До неї входять фестивалі, культурно-історичні екскурсії, гумористичні концерти, вечори, виставки мистецьких творів, публічні лекції. Виявлено специфіку споживання культурних онлайн-продуктів серед молоді, а також рівень попиту на культурні заходи такого формату. Також з'ясовано, що вже нині майже кожен четвертий молодий українець бере участь у волонтерських проєктах сфери культури. При цьому близько половини опитаної молоді не бере участь у таких заходах, але має бажання долучитися. Тобто в молоді є запит на участь у волонтерських культурних проєктах і, відповідно, саме молодь варто залучати до різноманітних заходів щодо відбудови та розвитку української культури як важливого агента суспільних змін.

**Ключові слова:** культурні практики, дозвілля, українська молодь, російсько-українська війна, онлайн-опитування.

## INTRODUCTION

The challenges of recent years have caused significant changes in the cultural practices of Ukrainians. Globalization processes, restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic, and, most traumatically, the full-scale russian invasion have profoundly impacted them. Millions of Ukrainians have been forced to resettle within the country or leave abroad. Hundreds of cultural and artistic figures have ceased their work. For a long time, almost no cultural events took place in Ukraine, dozens of institutions were destroyed or ceased their activities. The consequences of war and wartime restrictions have reduced the accessibility of cultural products for the population. According to estimates of direct losses as of June 2022, «...in conditions of missile attacks across the entire territory, military operations, occupation of eastern and southern regions of the country, 12,5 million residents of six regions of the country (Donetsk, Zaporizhia, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Kherson regions) lost access to cultural services, and another 13 million people from these seven regions are limited in their access at least by half» (Skokova, 2022, pp. 72–73). Despite these challenging changes, the Ukrainian cultural sphere and creative industries were able to adapt to the new conditions throughout 2022.

The Russo-Ukrainian War has confirmed that the importance of culture significantly increases during societal upheavals. According to Ukrainian researcher L. Skokova, the state of social instability can both suppress and stimulate cultural participation (Skokova, 2021, p. 591). Therefore, participation in cultural life can be essential in uniting Ukrainian society and asserting national identity.

In this article we explore how cultural practices among Ukrainians have changed on the example of youth as one of the most active and adaptive social group. The interest in this category is caused by the fact that young people are more actively responsive to cultural changes than the older generation, and their influence on culture and involvement in cultural activities is more pronounced.

The article **aims** to identify the characteristics of cultural practices among Ukrainian youth in the context of war, with the potential utilization of the research findings in the work of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the cultural sphere.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Analyzing existing studies by domestic and foreign researchers allows us to conclude that studying culture and cultural practices is widespread in Ukraine and abroad. This includes the general significance of culture as an important social phenomenon and a valuable component in structuring social space as noted by S. Voznyak and T. Kostyuk (2012). It also emphasizes the importance of cultural practices in social adaptation processes (Krnčić, & Vukušić, 2022).

At the same time, researchers often pay attention to specific types of cultural practices among different social groups, including youth. For example, Ukrainian scholars compared the reading habits of Ukrainian and Turkish students, demonstrating that the decline in interest in reading is a general global trend. However, regional specificities can be observed, particularly in Ukraine, where youth from western regions generally devote more time to reading (Bilavych et al., 2020). Croatian researchers focus on television's impact on youth's cultural capital. They highlight the differences in cultural preferences between young people and

their parents, particularly in the context of the influence of globalization on culture and cultural isolation (Krolo, Tonković, & Marčelić, 2020).

Among the works dedicated to the study of cultural practices in Ukrainian society, several recent publications are worth noting. For example, the contributions of L. Skokova (2018; 2021; 2022), L. Chupriy, K. Nastoyashcha (2020), as well as their collaboration (Chupriy et al., 2021) within the framework of the financial support from the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (UCF). Among others, research by Yu. Nazarenko, O. Syrбу, L. Filipchuk, and Ye. Khassay deserves attention, focusing on the leisure and cultural needs of urban youth in Ukraine (Nazarenko et al., 2020). Notable examples of studying the cultural practices of the Ukrainian population during the war are the results of a quantitative survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS, 2023) regarding the cultural practices of the Ukrainian population.

In the context of war cultural practices have become less relevant for researchers, but this does not diminish the role of culture during social upheavals as an essential component in expressing societal values. These values are currently directed toward achieving security and survival but are expected to shift toward development values after the end of the war (Dembitskyi et al., 2022). Ensuring appropriate value imperatives is crucial for the successful recovery and rebuilding of Ukrainian society, and culture can play a vital role in this process.

## 2. EMPIRICAL DATA

To achieve the stated objective, we will turn to the study's results on the cultural practices of Ukrainian youth in which the authors of this article directly participated. The research was conducted at the end of December 2022 and the beginning of January 2023 with the support of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (UCF).

An online survey was developed and conducted using Google Forms to gather information about youth cultural practices. This survey collected both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The approach offers several key advantages, such as time economy, accessibility to respondents, and broad geographic coverage. However, it is important to note some typical disadvantages, including potential sampling bias and the absence of direct contact with respondents. It is worth mentioning that the study is exploratory, as the respondent sample is not entirely balanced. Nonetheless, the obtained results provide valuable information about the specific characteristics of cultural practices among Ukrainian youth and form a foundation for developing hypotheses for further research. Data processing was performed by using the SPSS software.

Total the 604 respondents aged 18–35 from different regions of Ukraine were surveyed. Among the respondents 20,7 % were male, and 79,3 % were female. Regarding age distribution, 49,3 % of respondents were aged 18–24, and 50,7 % were aged 25–35. Assessing their families' financial situation over the past 2–3 months, 40,1 % of respondents indicated that they have enough money for food and clothing, but purchasing durable goods (such as a television, refrigerator, etc.) poses some difficulties. 21,1 % of respondents have enough money for everything necessary and can save, 19,9 % have enough money for everything essential but not for savings, 12,9 % have enough money only for food, 2,8 % of respondents live in affluence, and 3,2 % find it difficult to determine the financial situation of their families<sup>1</sup>. Most of the respondents reside in regional centers (42,3 %), 24,9 % live in Kyiv, 20,9 % are in district centers or small towns, and 11,9 % are residents of rural areas.

## 3. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Popular Cultural Practices

The survey results revealed that the most popular cultural practices among Ukrainian youth are visiting cinemas, bookstores and museums. However, more than half of the respondents visit these establishments

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<sup>1</sup> For the convenience of analysis, the categories «have enough money only for food» and «have enough money for both food and clothing, but purchasing durable goods poses some difficulties» were recoded in the array as below-average financial status. The category «have enough money for everything necessary, but not for savings» was classified as average, and the categories «have enough money for everything necessary and able to save» and «live in affluence» were classified as above-average. This approach to classifying financial status is supported by other publications as well (Financial stabilization of..., 2021, pp. 66–67).

only a few times a year. Young people visit libraries and discos the least, with about half of the respondents never visit these establishments or events at all (Fig. 1). The priority given to visiting cinemas can be explained by the opinions of the student youth, who believe that «the purpose of cinema... is to be a means of relaxation and entertainment (55 %), promote positive moral values (45,8 %), and be a source of new knowledge about the world and people (45 %)» (Salnikova, & Klymiuk, 2018, p. 46).

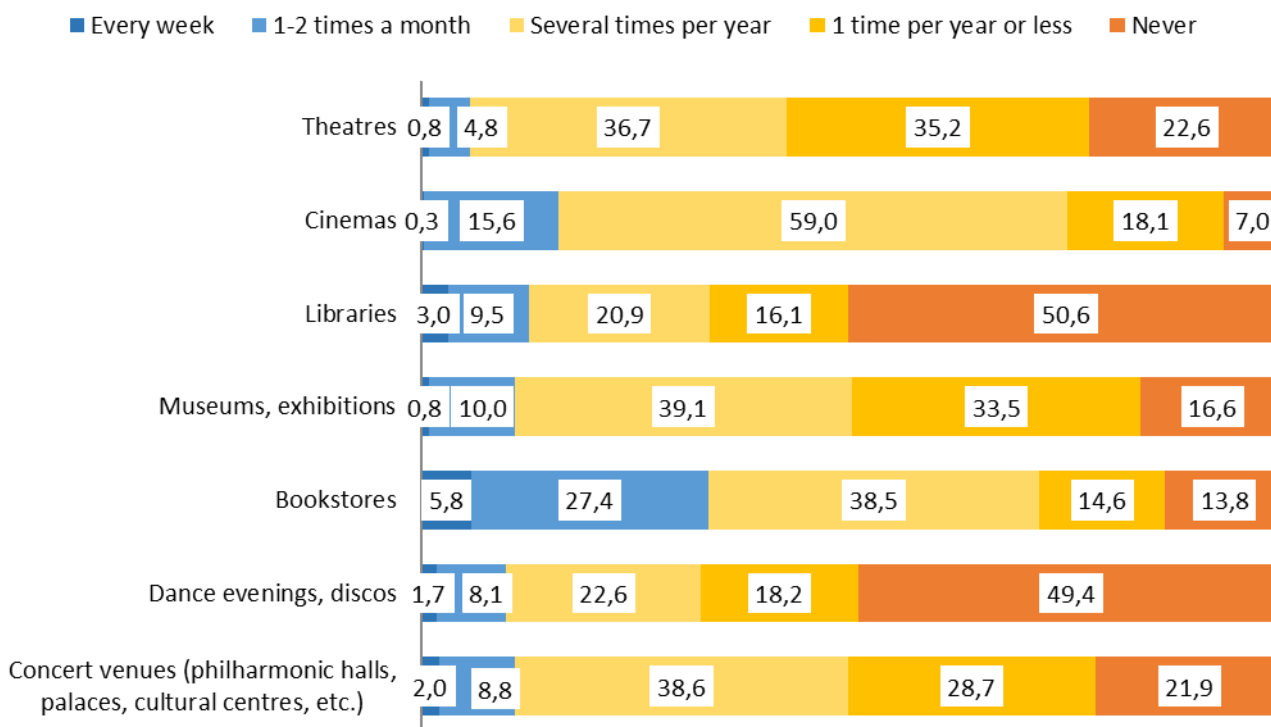


Fig. 1. How Often Do You Visit...?, %

Source: author's data analysis.

The survey indicates a trend<sup>1</sup> where the older age group of youth (25–35 years) more frequently visits theaters, while more than half of the younger group (18–24 years) are visitors of libraries, primarily due to their student status and educational purposes. With increasing age, there is a tendency to decrease interest in libraries and in reading books in general.

Regardless of the respondents' financial status, the overall level of attendance at cultural establishments is high – over 70 %. However, the highest attendance rate is among respondents with average economic well-being. They are the primary visitors of cultural institutions, including museums and bookstores. On the other hand, respondents with low-income visit theaters less than other categories. Still, they visit libraries more (similar to respondents with average income), likely due to the predominantly free access to reading books and other services.

In Kyiv and regional centers of Ukraine, there is a higher percentage of cultural events attendance due to their greater accessibility in large urban areas. However, certain cultural leisure activities are more prevalent in district centers and rural areas. This particularly applies to libraries, which are visited by over half of the youth from small towns and rural areas (UCF, 2023).

Overall, the indicator of cultural institution visitation, which stands at 70 %, confirms the thesis that young people are the drivers of cultural change in society, more frequently engaging in cultural events compared to the overall trends in Ukraine (according to the survey conducted by KIIS, this indicator is 60 % among the adult population of Ukraine, but among young people aged 18–29, it is 76 %) (UCF, 2023).

<sup>1</sup> All the differences between the groups are statistically significant (the «chi-square» test is significant at the 0,05 level).

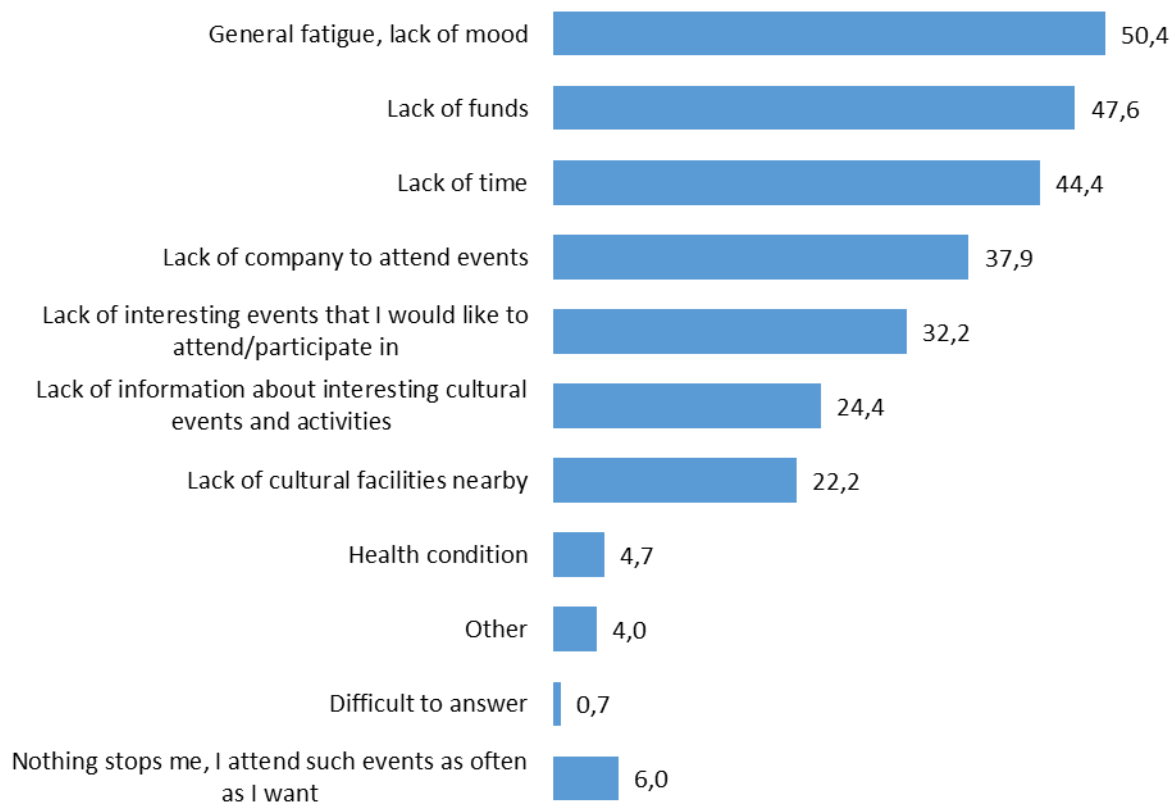
The survey revealed that during the war respondents noticeably increased their attention to communication with family and friends (57,3 %). Significant interest was also shown in self-education (47,3 %) and various social and charitable projects (46,2 %). The war's five most popular cultural practices included reading books (43,9 %) and watching movies (42,6 %).

Attendance of cultural events has decreased since the beginning of the war. 72,8 % of respondents stated that they attended cultural events less in 2022. However, for 13,6 % of respondents the situation remained unchanged, and they continued participating in cultural events as before the full-scale russian invasion.

Nearly half of the respondents believe the safety measures during cultural events are sufficient. Only about 16 % consider them insufficient, and another third cannot evaluate the safety conditions during cultural events. Therefore, a big number of cultural institutions have adapted to the challenges of war and have been able to organize safe cultural events. The feeling of danger is not the main factor that prevents attending cultural events. Over half of the respondents from Kyiv and regional centers in general believe that the safety measures are sufficient. In contrast, only a quarter of respondents share this view in rural areas.

### 3.2. Factors of (non)Attendance of Cultural Events

What hinders young people from actively attending cultural events? The results showed that, apart from the war, the main factors are general fatigue, lack of mood, lack of funds, and lack of time. At the same time, 6 % of respondents state that they have no obstacles at all to attending cultural events (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** *What, Apart from the War, Stops You from Attending Cultural Events More Often?, %*  
Source: author's data analysis.

### 3.3. Focus of Cultural Interests Among Youth

One of the research objectives was to identify cultural events and activities that are the most interesting to Ukrainian youth. Therefore, the most interesting activities for young people include: watching movies in cinemas or cinema clubs, attending festivals and theatrical performances. The least interesting activities are public commemorations of historical dates, honoring notable figures, sports and entertainment events and discos (Fig. 3).

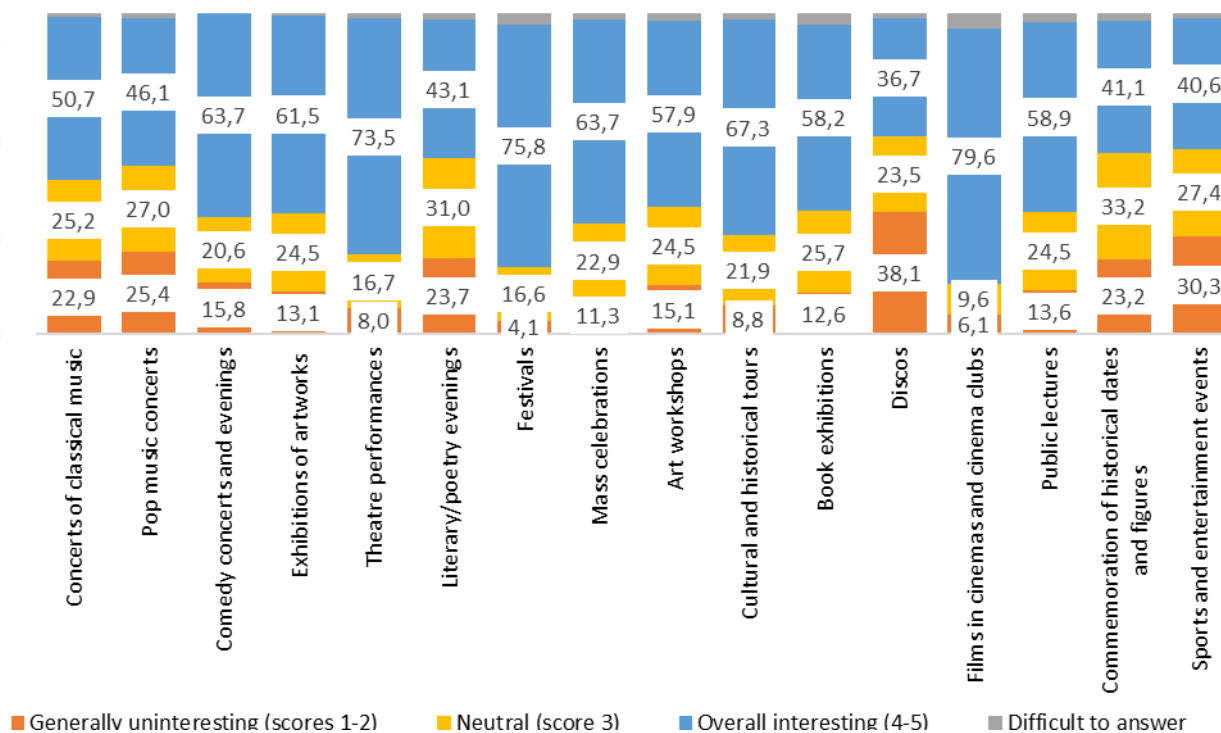


Fig. 3. How Interesting the Following Cultural Events are for You Personally?, %

Source: author's data analysis.

The study revealed that less than half of the surveyed youth (43,8 %) are generally satisfied with the organization of cultural leisure activities. Conversely, 21,1 % expressed overall dissatisfaction.

In terms of satisfaction with cultural leisure, a clear pattern can be observed concerning the type of settlement: the smaller the settlement, the lower the satisfaction with cultural leisure. For example, while 72 % of respondents in Kyiv are satisfied with cultural events overall, this figure drops to 47,8 % in regional centers, 19 % in district centers, and 13,9 % in rural areas.

Regarding specific cultural events, Ukrainian youth are most satisfied with film screenings in cinemas or cinema clubs, theatrical performances, mass celebrations, and festivals. The least satisfaction is derived from discos, pop music concerts literary and poetry evenings (Fig. 4).

### 3.4. Matrix of Cultural Needs Satisfaction among Youth

A matrix of cultural needs satisfaction was explicitly created to determine the most desirable cultural services among youth. It identifies a zone of cultural needs deficit, which refers to the needs that have the highest demand among youth but are unsatisfied (Fig. 5).

Ratings in the matrix are distributed along two axes:

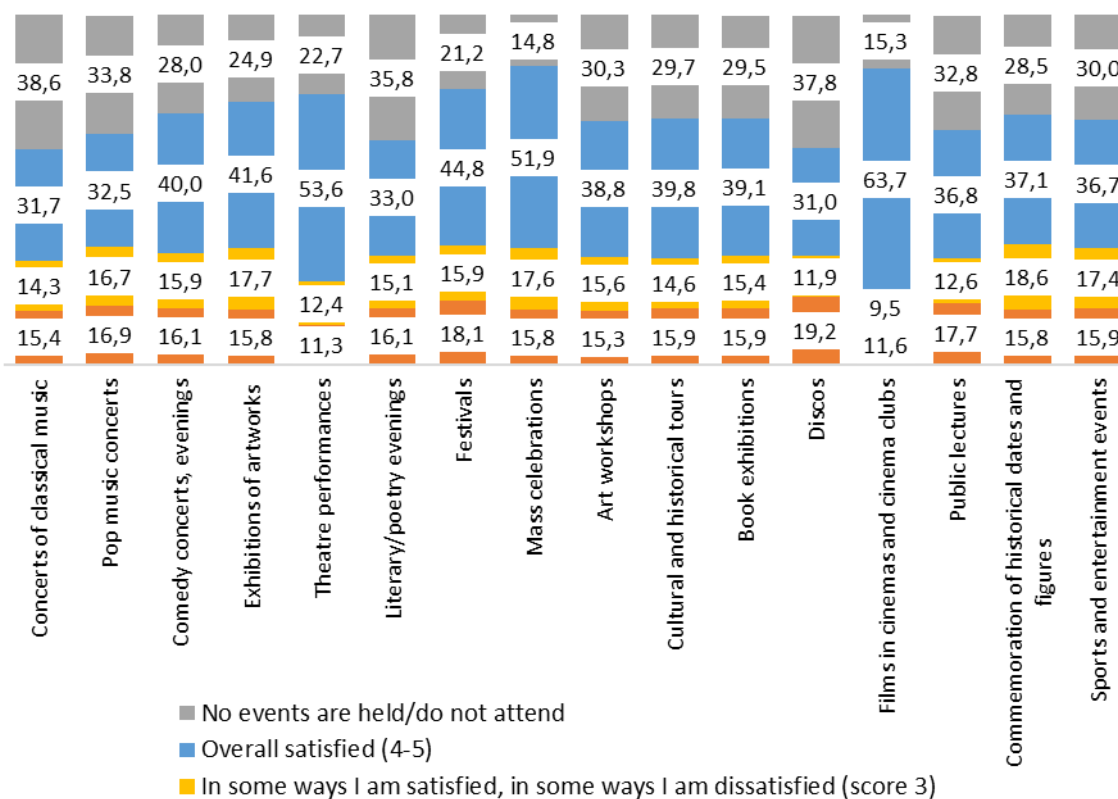
- The horizontal axis represents the average interest ratings in various cultural events.
- The vertical axis represents the average satisfaction ratings with specific cultural events.

The intersection point of these axes (the zero-coordinate) represents the average rating of interest in all events and the average rating of satisfaction with all events.

As a result, four zones are distinguished:

- «High interest, high satisfaction» – satisfied actual needs.
- «High interest, low satisfaction» – DEFICIT ZONE.
- «Low interest, high satisfaction» – satisfied unactual needs.
- «Low interest, low satisfaction» – unsatisfied unactual needs.

The following cultural needs have been identified as falling into the deficit zone among youth: festivals, cultural and historical tours, comedy concerts and evenings, exhibitions of artworks and public lectures.



**Fig. 4.** How Satisfied are You with the Following Cultural Events Organized in Your Settlement?, %  
Source: author's data analysis.

### 3.5. Online Cultural Events

The Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2020 accelerated the transformation of the cultural sphere, which, relying on its digital potential, was forced to adapt its events to an online format. With the onset of a full-scale war, these trends only intensified. Therefore, the research also aimed to identify the specifics of consuming online cultural products among youth and the level of demand for cultural events in this format.

According to the survey results, since the beginning of the war, more than the half of the respondents did not attend any cultural events in an online format (53,8 %). There is likely fatigue from the virtual format of cultural events, which gained more popularity during the pandemic.

The war did not significantly affect the interest in online cultural events. Almost half of the respondents stated that their interest in such events remained unchanged. At the same time 20 % of the respondents mentioned that they became more interested in online events, while 18 % of the respondents reported decreased interest. The highest increase in interest in online events was observed in rural areas, while the most significant decrease was in Kyiv.

The main reason why live events are difficult to replace with an online format, according to most respondents, is that such a replacement is not fully equivalent (Fig. 6). However, respondents also see apparent advantages of online events, such as accessibility (67,3 %), safety (57,5 %) and convenience (41 %). Nevertheless, there are drawbacks as well, including the lack of live interaction (83,7 %), less sense of presence compared to in-person events (78,4 %) and dependence on technical devices (75,3 %). Likely, relying on a complete replacement of live events with online formats is not feasible since there is a high demand for offline events. At the present stage, an optimal approach would be a combination of both formats, provided with high-quality technical support.

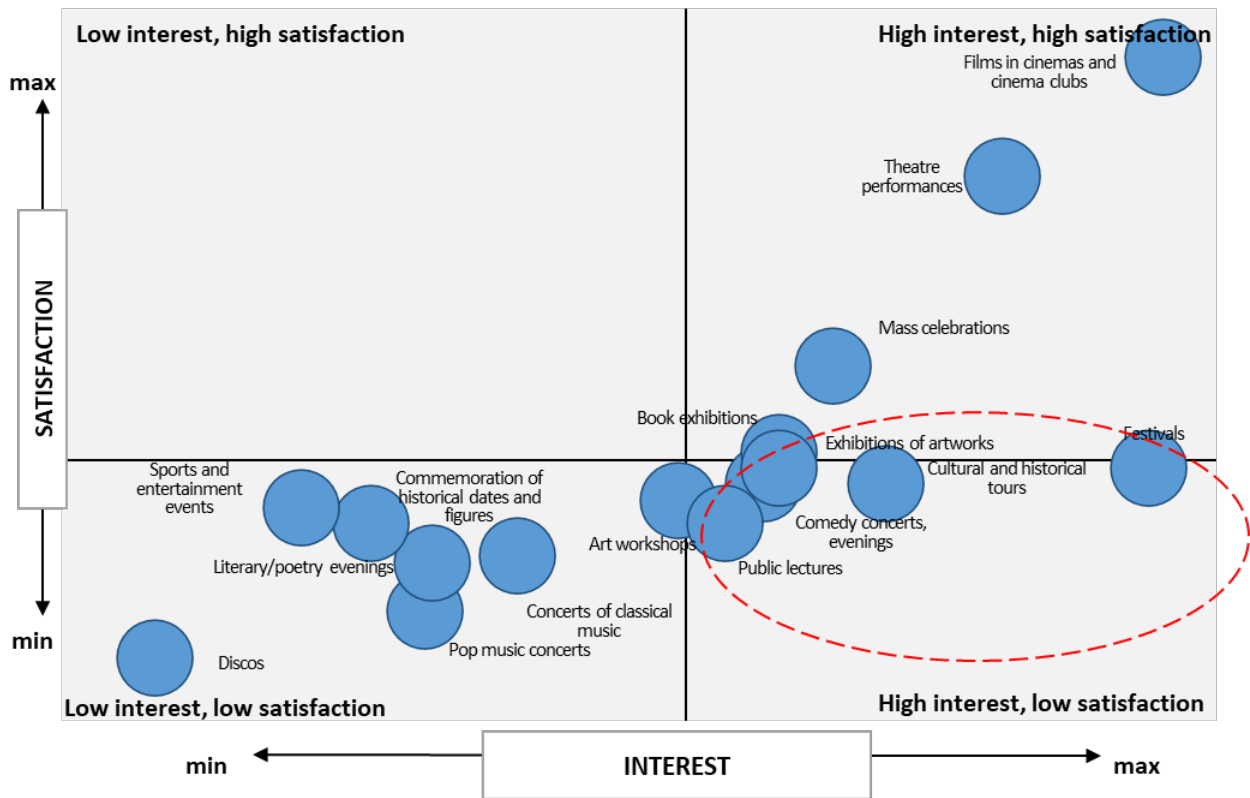


Fig. 5. Matrix of Cultural Needs Satisfaction

Source: author's data analysis.

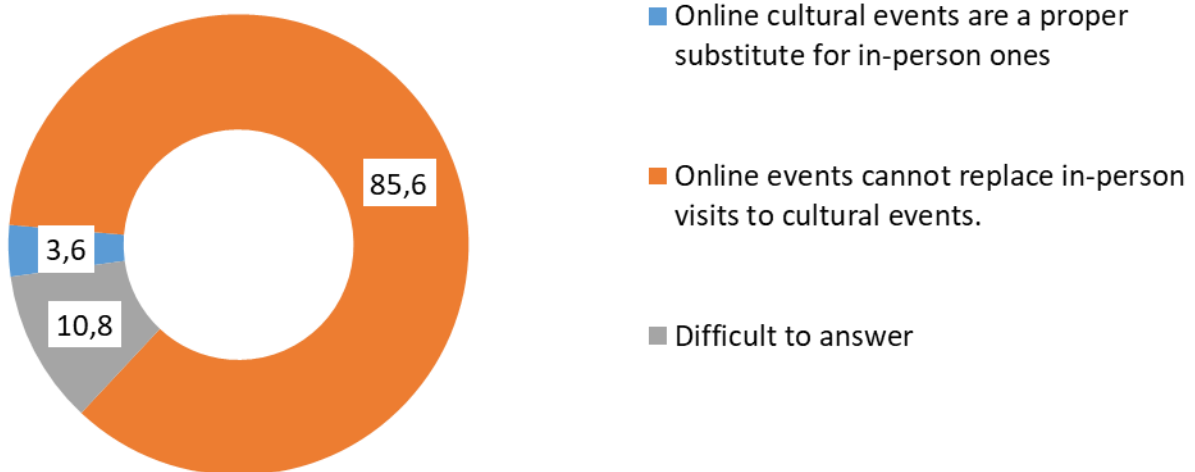
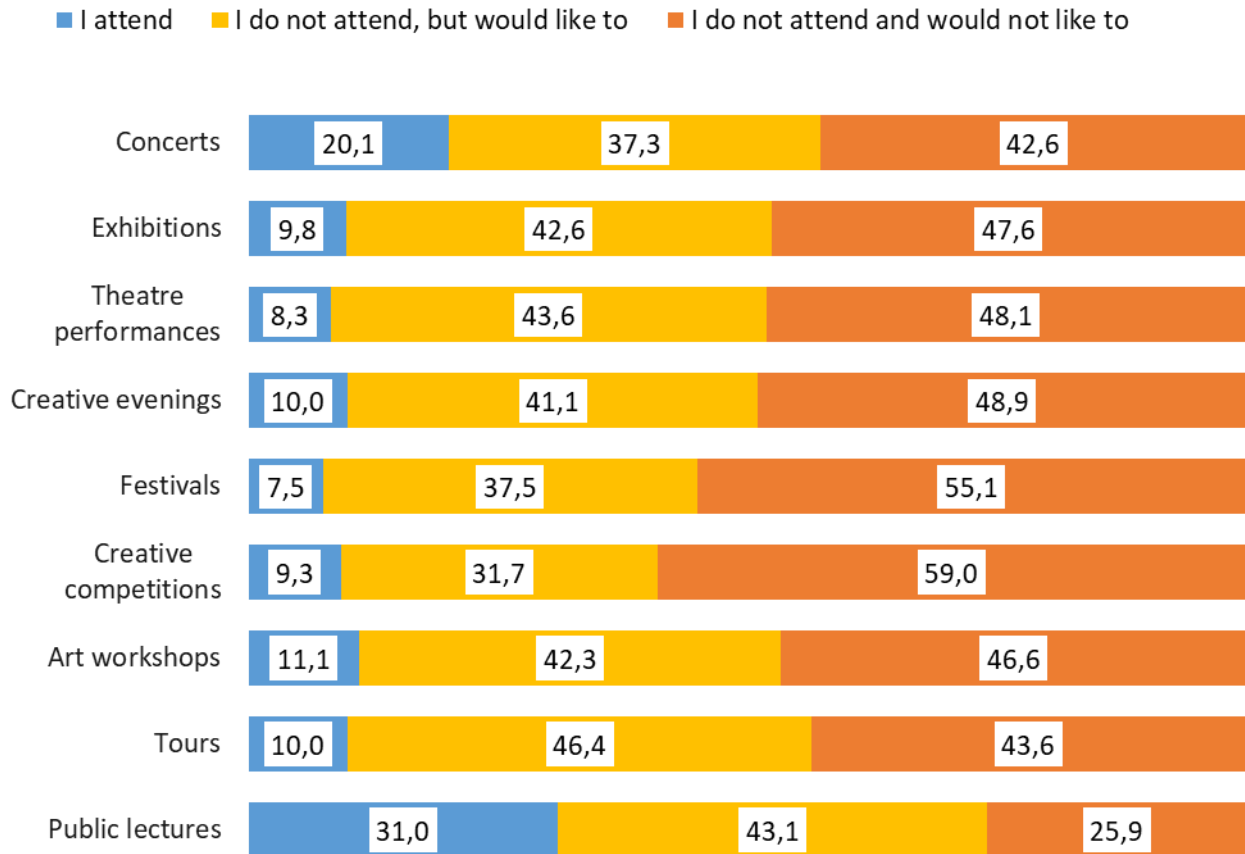


Fig. 6. With which of the Following Statements about Online Cultural Events Do You Agree Most of all?, %  
Source: author's data analysis.

Among online cultural events, respondents most frequently attend public lectures (31 %) and concerts (20,1 %) (Fig. 7). However, overall there is a low interest among the respondents in attending online events. In general, a higher percentage of women show interest in online cultural events compared to men.



There is a noticeable trend in the demand for online cultural events based on the type of settlement. Respondents from rural areas in comparison to residents of urban areas more often indicate their interest in almost all types of online cultural events.

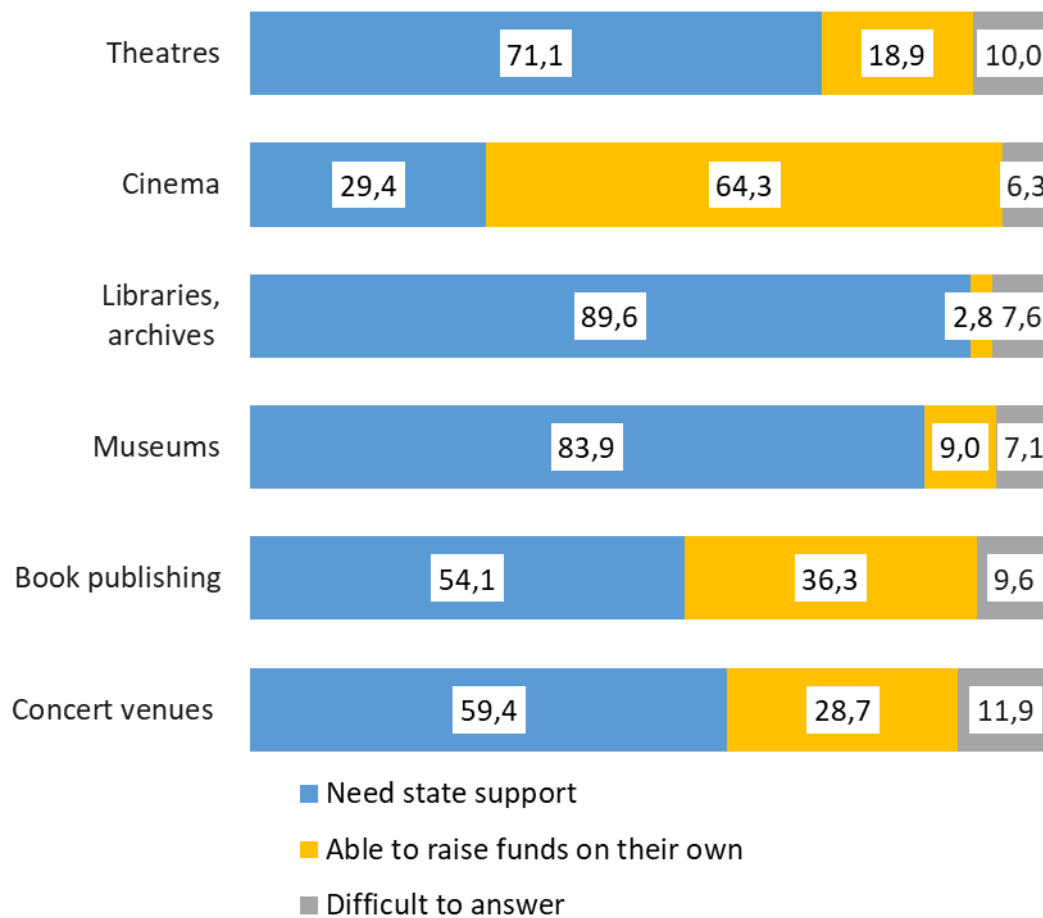


**Fig. 7.** Which Events Do You Attend or Would Like to Attend in an Online Format?, %  
Source: author's data analysis.

### 3.6. (Non)Government Support for the Cultural Sector and Volunteer Initiatives

As mentioned earlier, the cultural sector, which was predominantly funded on a residual basis even before the full-scale invasion, suffered significant losses during the war. This situation raises questions about the recovery and support of the industry. Therefore, within the scope of the research, it was interesting to find out which cultural institutions, according to the respondents, can generate income for their full functioning independently and which ones would not be able to do so without support, particularly from the government. As a result, respondents believe that most cultural institutions require government support. This includes libraries, archives, museums and theaters. At the same time, the only area that, according to respondents, can sustain itself solely through its activities is the film industry (Fig. 8).

One of the research objectives was to determine the current level of youth involvement in volunteer events in the cultural sphere and estimate to what extent young people are potentially willing to participate in such projects. The survey shows that many young people have not yet participated in any such projects despite their desire to engage in volunteer events in the cultural sector (44,1 %). There is a noticeably lower percentage of those who are already regularly or occasionally involved in individual events (27,7 %). In comparison, those who do not participate and do not wish to participate are 20,2 %. Women, in particular, show greater interest in participating in volunteer initiatives in the cultural sphere. Residents of rural areas and respondents with average income level are more likely to participate in volunteer cultural projects than others. There is a high level of interest in cultural events among young people, and in the future they may join various initiatives to restore the potential of Ukrainian culture.



**Fig. 8.** *In Your Opinion, which Areas Need State Funding, and which Areas are Capable of Making a Profit on Their Own?, %*

Source: author's data analysis.

### CONCLUSIONS

Like other sectors, the cultural sphere has suffered due to the full-scale Russian invasion. First and foremost, the number of cultural events has decreased, the number of professionals actively working in the field has diminished, and some cultural and artistic institutions have been destroyed. This has also impacted the attendance of cultural events – survey results indicate that over 70 % of the surveyed youth have attended cultural events and venues less frequently since the beginning of the war. The main obstacles of attending cultural events are general fatigue, lack of funds and lack of free time. The war has significantly affected the leisure practices of Ukrainian youth. The survey shows that respondents have dedicated considerably more time to volunteer work and spending time with their families and friends. This can be seen as a form of adaptation to the challenges of war and a way to replace leisure activities, including attending cultural events. Despite this, various cultural events are generally considered attractive by the majority of respondents. Although interest in online projects has increased somewhat due to the live cultural events reduction, most respondents believe that online events can only partially replace offline formats of cultural events. Half of the respondents were generally satisfied with organizing cultural leisure activities in their settlement during the war. These indicators show that the network of cultural organizations and institutions has adapted to wartime challenges and partially or fully restored its operations. The substantial part of respondents also mentioned that they are generally satisfied with the level of cultural events being held. However, respondents do not attend some types of cultural events due to a lack of opportunity,

indicating that the war has led to a significant decrease in the diversity of cultural events in Ukraine. Notably, approximately half of the respondents are willing to participate in volunteer events in the cultural sphere, and around 28 % of them are already involved in such activities. This form of activity by Ukrainian youth is crucial for the post-war reconstruction of the country and the cultural sphere in particular. It should be considered when developing a unified state strategy to recover and develop Ukrainian culture.

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