

Cultural events attract little interest

Government blamed for lack of support for cultural activities, but poll shows little interest from the public

Part IV of Information International's opinion poll exploring the media habits and cultural activities of the Lebanese population takes a look at the results of exhibition and museum attendance, as well as national touristic preferences and favored cultural and literary figures.

The poll was carried out in Greater Beirut with a sample of 600 and a gender distribution of 41.2% female and 58.8% male respondents.

Exhibitions

76.3% of those surveyed never attend exhibitions, as shown in **Graph 1**. Of the respondents who visit exhibitions, penetration was highest in the eldest age bracket of 65 and above, followed by the 45-54 bracket (see **Graph 2**).

In terms of penetration by gender, attendance within the female category (27%) was higher than that among males (21%).

Painting exhibitions were the most popular among respondents, as indicated in **Graph 3**. Handicraft shows were the next most popular, followed by photography exhibits.

While both men and women preferred painting exhibits, men favored photography over handicrafts and vice versa for women. In terms of age, painting was also the most favored across all age groups, but handicrafts became more popular as age increased, while interest in photography decreased with age.

A look at the geographical distribution of those who attend exhibitions indicated that residents of Beirut make up the greatest portion, followed by those of Metn, Baabda and Aley.

The National Museum

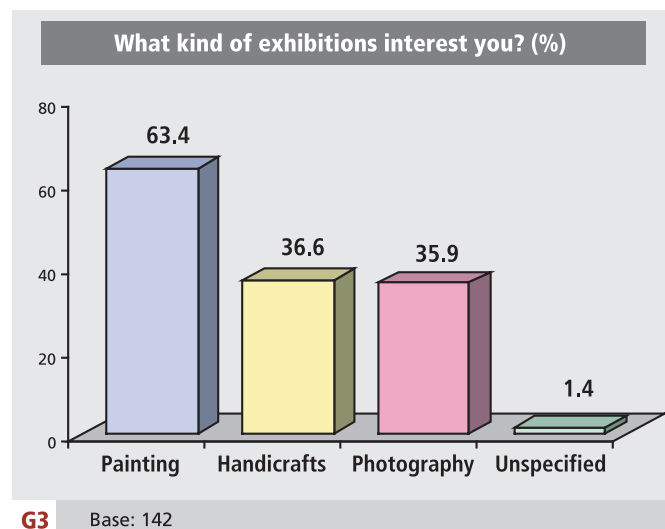
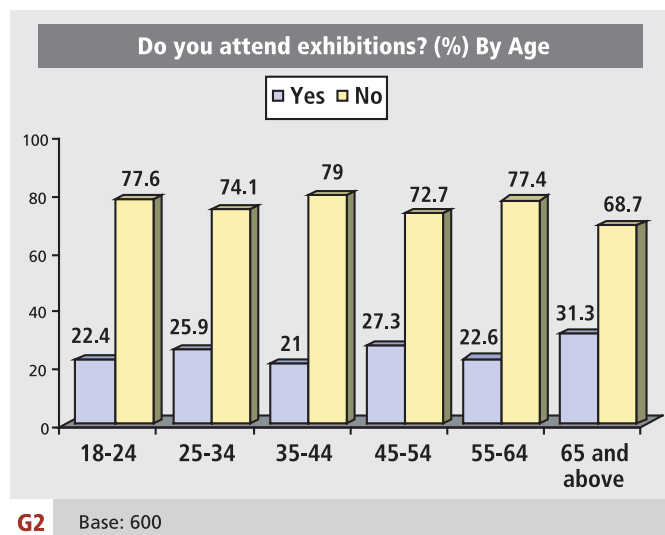
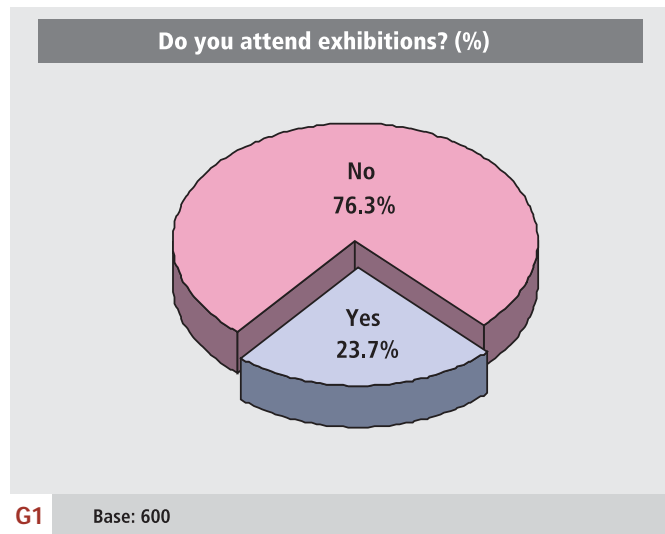
As illustrated in **Graph 4**, only 31.5% of respondents have visited the National Museum, while 4.5% said they made an attempt but it was closed at the time.

Penetration within the age groups was highest in the 45-54 age bracket, followed by those aged 55-64. The 18-24 age bracket came next, the 25-34 bracket was fourth and those within the 65+ group had the lowest attendance rate.

The majority of museum-goers were from the Beirut area, followed by residents of Baabda, Metn and Aley.

Archeological sites

Graph 5 addresses the public's interest, or lack of, in the country's archeological sites, and reveals that 10.2% of



respondents have not visited any of them, while 17.1% claim to have visited them all.

It is also interesting to note that, while Baalbeck is one of the country's major historical sites, it was the least visited. In addition, 15.9% of respondents had never been to Aanjar, the old Ummayyad city, and 11.4% had not visited the famous Jeita Grotto. Archeological sites in the cities of Sour, Saida, Tripoli and Byblos were also neglected, as illustrated in the graph.

The highest percentage of visitors to archeological sites was found in the 15–25 age bracket, with the proportion tending to decrease progressively with age.

In terms of education, it did not seem to play a role in the likelihood of visiting such sites as no significant correlation was detected between those who visited all the sites and those who did not visit any.

Government support

As shown in **Graph 6**, almost 70% of respondents do not believe that the Lebanese government supports cultural activities. Out of those who do not believe there is enough government support, 77% were respondents who do not attend exhibitions and 66% had never been to the National Museum.

Favored cultural and literary figures

Respondents were queried as to their favorite singers, dancers, writers, poets and directors, and some of their characteristics were profiled based on the response.

A look at the majority of respondents who named Kahlil Gibran as their favorite writer (28.5%) shows that they are bigger consumers of newspapers than of magazines and books, while those who preferred Shukri Anis Fakhoury (7.5%) were mostly inclined to read magazines, followed by newspapers and books. The most favored poet was Nizar Qabbani, according to 47.9% of respondents, followed by Said AKI at 6.5% and Al Mutannabi at 6.1%. The top director according to 25.5% of respondents was Simon Asmar, while 17.6% chose Marwan Najjar and 3.6% replied that it was Antoine Remy.

In terms of category, beauty queens were the most well known with average recognition of 93.1% (former Miss Lebanon Georgina Rizk was familiar to 97.8% of respondents). Singers followed with an average of 81.6% (even Marcel Khalife was recognized as a singer rather than as a composer by 86.2%) and dancers averaged 79.5% recognition (90.2% of respondents could identify Amani). This is in contrast to only 15.1% average recognition for the category of painters, with only 6.3% of respondents who were aware of Omar Ounsi and 1.8% who were familiar with Saliba Doueih. n

