

Van Gogh Meets

How the Van Gogh Museum helps people grow older in good health

The most important findings from audience research into the 70+ programme at the Van Gogh Museum



Van
Gogh
Museum

Amsterdam

“Learning about art later
in life feels like I’m being
given another chance.”

Male, aged 80

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70 + programme



Van Gogh Museum

The Van Gogh Museum makes the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and the art of his time accessible and reaches as many people as possible in order to enrich and inspire them. With its 70+ programme, the museum strives to positively impact the health of the increasing number of elderly people in the Netherlands, the population of which is aging.



Aims

We use Van Gogh to help create meaning for the elderly, to enhance social interaction and to help participants to (re)discover their talents.



Target group

The Van Gogh Museum focuses on vulnerable elderly people who, due to a physical disability or a limited social network, are not in the position to visit the museum in person. The elderly people (aged 70 and above) are 'vulnerable' to a greater or lesser extent. They do all exhibit a degree of potential, and the desire to become actively involved with culture. The museum primarily focuses on the large group of elderly people who live independently.



How does the Van Gogh Museum reach the target group?

- The museum collaborates with partners from the fields of health and wellbeing:
- The participants join special museum visits with activities (70+).
 - The museum organizes special on-location workshops and lectures.



Audience research

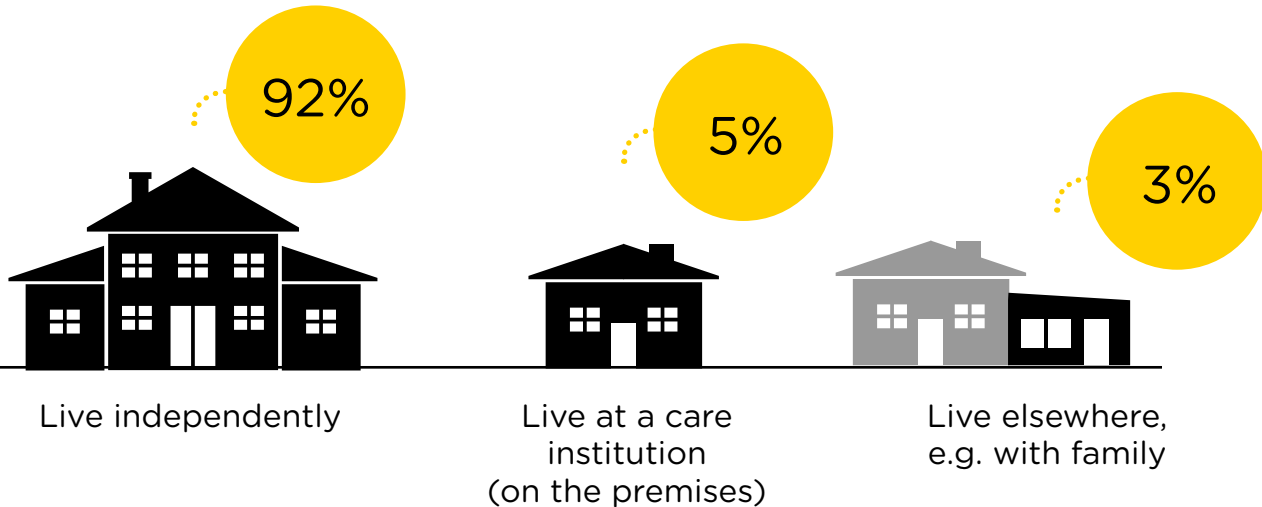
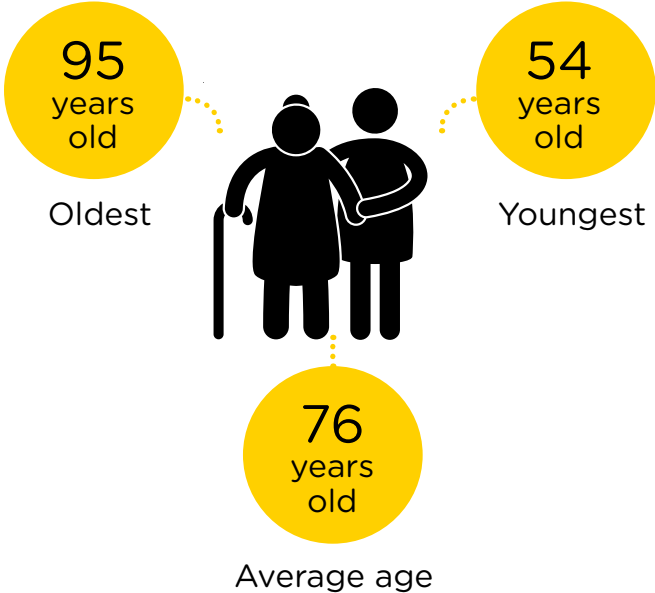
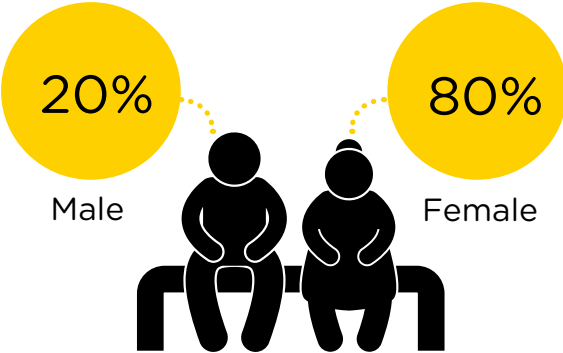
In 2018, the Van Gogh Museum launched special museum days for visitors aged 70 and above, and invited Amsterdam-based agency MARE to conduct audience research. MARE completed quantitative research involving 158 visitors during four different museum days, alongside qualitative research involving interviews with 15 elderly people, conducted three weeks later at the homes of the participants.

Research findings

With its dedicated 70+ programme, the Van Gogh Museum has a positive impact on the health of elderly people.

- The dedicated programme helps create meaning for the participants.
- The collaboration with care institutions & welfare organisations allows the museum to offer elderly visitors a more inclusive and accessible introduction to art.
- Working in small groups allows for sufficient focus on each participant and scope for individual contributions.
- Thanks to the positive attention they receive from the museum staff, the elderly participants feel welcome.
- Experiences in the museum inspire the elderly participants to more frequently engage in art and culture.
- The participants are involved in meaningful social interactions.
- The participants reflect on an enjoyable experience for weeks after the event, and enthusiastically share their stories with others.

Who are the visitors?



11%



Participating in
cultural activities
for the first time

26%



Has not visited the
Van Gogh Museum
before

“You look at an artwork together, get talking, have a chat. You make contact, which makes you feel less lonely.”

Male, 76 years old

“It brings me relief. Isn’t it amazing how people can create things? It’s fantastic to have such talents. Up-close, it’s a jumble of dashes, but from a distance, you see what it is.”

Female, 76 years old

“I always did this sort of thing together with my wife, before she passed away.”

Male, 74 years old

“Particularly the commitment of the staff made me feel right at home!”

Female, 73 years old





What do we know about the visitors?

Elderly people with little experience in the arts and culture

These visitors have had little or no previous experience with art and culture.
They are culturally active a maximum of four times a year.

Profile

Level of knowledge

- Elderly people with little knowledge of museums or artists
- They do not know what to expect at a museum

Attitude

- The elderly are curious, but feel hindered
- “Art and culture aren’t at all for me”

Behaviour

- Knowing another participant or an invitation from a known care institution or welfare organisation can trigger an elderly person to register for an event and leave the house



After the museum visit

Experience

- A positive, accessible experience helps to overcome the hindrance that the elderly people felt beforehand: “Art and culture are actually my thing after all!”

Likelihood of recommendation

- High

Communication with the target group

Channels to reach the elderly people

- Through care institutions and welfare organisations, the library and by word of mouth (i.e. elderly people who have already participated)

Method of communication

- Present the activities as accessible as possible (‘normal’ people in visuals)
- Communicate that the visit includes guidance

Elderly people with experience in the arts and culture

These visitors were and/or are actively involved with art and culture.
They are culturally active more than four times a year.

Profile

Level of knowledge

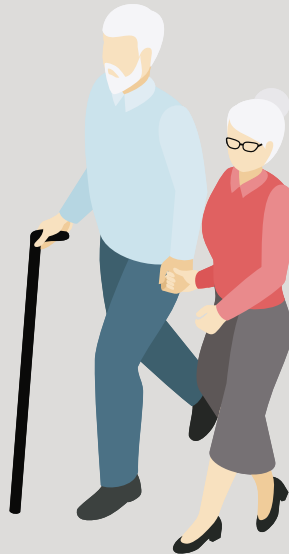
- Elderly people who regularly visit a museum
- Elderly people who are actively improving their knowledge, with books, workshops, lectures, etc.
- They are familiar with the artist

Attitude

- For these elderly people, art and culture inspires them and enriches their lives
- They enjoy experiencing the art and talking about it afterwards
- The elderly people are interested in other activities and keen to learn more

Behaviour

- The elderly people regularly attend cultural activities or participate themselves (singing, painting)
- Culture is a regular element of their lives
- The elderly people own a Museumkaart
- They know what to expect in a museum, and have prior experience of viewing art



After the museum visit

Experience

- The elderly people appreciate the trained guides taking their level of knowledge into account
- They learn new things and gain a fresh perspective on Van Gogh

Likelihood of recommendation

- High

Communication with the target group

Channels to reach the elderly people

- Through advertisements in (free local) newspapers or in the Van Gogh Museum newsletter

Method of communication

- Elderly people with relatively more experience are triggered by the idea of having the opportunity to learn new things (improving existing knowledge)

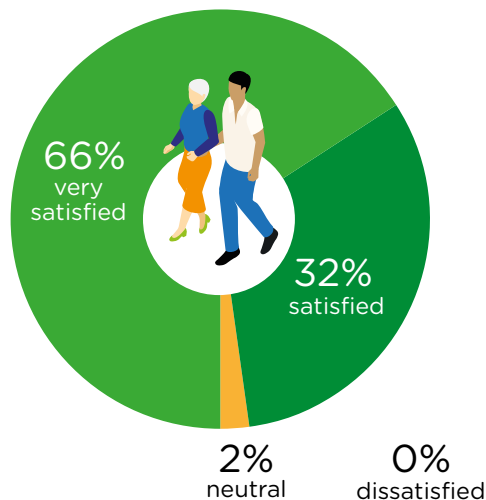


Artistieke uitwisseling Artistic Exchange



“What stuck in my mind is how warm-hearted everyone was. You can actually feel that they are pleased that you are there. That is truly special.”

Participant satisfaction



Issues



Accessibility for walking frames/wheelchairs due to few lifts



Crowding in the museum



Participants are keen to discuss more paintings (i.e. duration of programme)

Explanation of satisfaction Respondents were able to give multiple answers.



43% Informative, interesting (learning new things)



35% Touching, surprising, worthwhile



23% Pleasant, involved staff members



9% Recurring activities (also at other museums)



35% Enthusiastic, inspiring tour guide



25% Well organized



16% 'Gezellig' (congenial), relaxed atmosphere



8% Great initiative





“At the library, I met someone who didn’t come along. After hearing my stories, they regretted not going. It is truly fantastic.”

“What I like the best is the new perspective on Van Gogh’s life. I really have the idea that I now understand him better.”

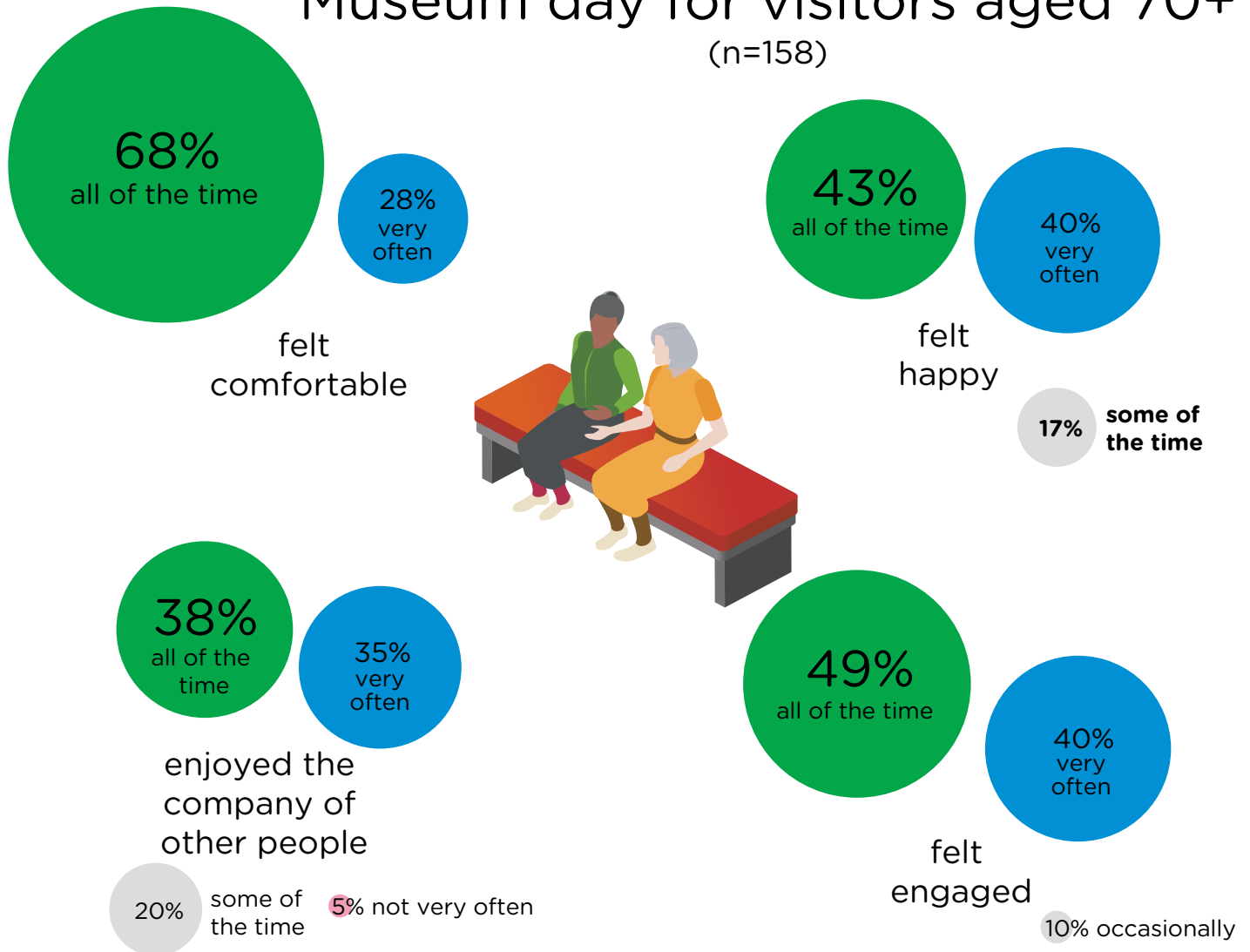


Preconditions of a successful museum visit for people over 70

- Manage expectations in advance: provide clear information about the entrance, programme, group composition, accessibility, etc.
- Subject matter needs to cater to different knowledge levels, without being childish.
- Warm welcome and time for discussion afterwards – ideally with catering – enhances sense of appreciation, ensuring people feel they are in a safe environment in which to experience and learn.
- The 70+ participants are highly keen to continue learning, improve themselves and make new acquaintances. All of the personnel who comes into contact with the target group (guides, hospitality staff and security officers) therefore require suitable training.
- Sufficient time and individual attention during the guided tour: effective use of small groups and waiting times (e.g. at lifts).
- A small gift after the event is appreciated and allows the experience to continue once the visitors have left the museum.
- Offer scope for feedback and, where possible, take immediate action to implement changes to further improve the programme.

Emotions during the museum visit

Museum day for visitors aged 70+ (n=158)



“I do it so that I am still concerned, still have new experiences. I often wouldn’t get involved by myself, but with a group like this, you share a great experience and can talk about it afterwards.”

“I have lived by myself since November 2015, and I feel lonely. Now that my eyesight is failing me, I increasingly worry about the future and have started to feel vulnerable.”



Contributing to positive health

Health is about more than simply medical aspects, where the focus is on what an individual is no longer able to do. Health is therefore increasingly often defined by the six dimensions of positive health, devised by Dr. Machteld Huber. The research has revealed that the Van Gogh Museum's 70+ programme contributes to the positive health of the participants.



Social & societal participation

The elderly remain 'involved'. There is social interaction between the participants themselves, but also between the younger museum staff members and the elderly people.

Quality of life

Elderly people see the visit as a welcome surprise in their everyday life. It helps them escape the daily grind. The participants enjoy the experience long after they have left the museum.

Spiritual/Existential dimension

As people get older, the search for meaning appears to intensify. The museum visit allows the participants to explore the subject in depth and helps fulfil their desire to continue learning (lifelong learning). The elderly people really enjoy themselves.

Mental functions & perception

The elderly people experience new things or learn something new. This contributes to their sense of dignity (of mattering).

Physical functions

The Van Gogh Museum offers a varied programme. During the museum visit, elderly people are encouraged to actively take part. During the workshops, participants have the opportunity to try their hand at drawing.

Daily functioning

The elderly people like to have a reason to leave the house. The visit to the museum keeps them active.

Activities for elderly people age 70 and above: *Van Gogh Meets*

Discover the life and work of Vincent van Gogh

MUSEUM VISIT WITH ACTIVITIES

Would you prefer to visit the museum in your own time, accompanied by our welcoming staff? Do you enjoy sharing the experience with others, and would you like to find out more about the life and work of the Netherlands' most famous artist? Join *Van Gogh Meets*: museum visits with activities and additional guidance.

Programme

Participants are personally welcomed to the museum by our hosts, before being offered coffee or tea and biscuits. Following a short introduction, the group is split into smaller groups before being guided through the museum by one of our specially trained guides.

The museum offers a morning and afternoon programme, with sufficient time following the guided tour to visit the museum shop.

INTERACTIVE LECTURE

From Brabant to Paris; Van Gogh lived and worked in many places. He often painted his 'home'. This subject is explored and discussed in detail during the interactive lecture, which also examines fragments of letters that Van Gogh wrote while on his travels. Using the theme 'home and away', participants discuss the life of Van Gogh, and their own lives. The lecture is held by a professional art lecturer. Recognition and reminiscing are important aspects of the programme, which features discussion and narrative elements alongside active assignments.

Practical information

The one-hour lectures are for at least 12 participants, up to a maximum of 30. The art lecturer travels to a home for the elderly or to a location close to the participants. In the case of the latter, the participants travel independently to the location, or accompanied by staff from the care home.

OUTREACH WORKSHOPS

The *Van Gogh Meets* programme organizes workshops for elderly people at locations in the vicinity, e.g. a care institution or community centre. Workshop supervisors travel the country with a mobile studio. During this accessible workshop, participants are introduced to the life and work of Van Gogh. They discover how art inspires, and how it lets them connect with others. The most important aspect is that the participants discover the effect that art has on them, irrespective of age or ability. With this programme, the Van Gogh Museum helps to make the life and work of Van Gogh accessible to all ages.

Programme

Workshop 1: foundation workshop *Introduction to Van Gogh*

Workshop 2: in-depth workshop *Landscape and Colour*

Workshop 3: in-depth workshop *The Letters*

It is also possible to book the individual programme elements separately. The programme can be combined with a visit to the museum. Please contact us to discuss the possibilities.

Practical information

The 90-minute workshops are for at least 8 participants, up to a maximum of 15 (excluding 2 or 3 carers/volunteers). The artist/workshop supervisor travels to a home for the elderly or to a location close to the participants. In the case of the latter, the participants travel independently to the location, or accompanied by staff from the care home.





More information

Are you 70+ or do you work with those aged 70 and above? Would you like to find out more about our 70+ programme? Looking for more information about the museum days and lectures, or an outreach workshop? Contact us by sending an email to ontmoet@vangoghmuseum.nl or by calling +31(0)20 5708 742.

For more information, please visit www.vangoghmuseum.nl/70-plus

Van Gogh Meets (70+)

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