



CERS

Cultural and creative ecosystem
of Latvia as a resource
of resilience and sustainability

DIGITAL CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN LATVIA

RESEARCH REPORT OVERVIEW

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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This report “**Digital Cultural Participation in Latvia**” has been developed within the framework of the State Research Programme project “**Cultural and Creative Ecosystem of Latvia as a Resource for Resilience and Sustainability**” / CERS. The project is implemented by the Institute of Arts and Cultural Studies of the Latvian Academy of Culture and funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia within the State Research Programme “Latvian Culture – a Resource for National Development” (2023–2026), administered by the Latvian Council of Science.

The aim of the report is to provide new knowledge about how digital technologies influence cultural consumption habits in Latvia. The study focuses on the perspective of the population: how people use digital cultural content, how digital practices relate to in-person cultural participation, which social groups are more or less involved in digital cultural activities, and what this means for cultural policy and cultural organisations.

Digital cultural consumption is understood broadly in the report: it includes not only watching films, listening to music, reading e-books or viewing online performances, but also searching for cultural information, buying tickets online, following cultural institutions and artists on social media, using digital collections and archives, participating in online communities, sharing cultural content, and engaging in digital creative self-expression.

The report’s methodology is based on a mixed-method research design. The quantitative part uses a representative survey of 1,050 Latvian residents aged 15–75, conducted using the same respondent base as the Cultural Activity Barometer 2024 (Latvian Academy of Culture, 2025). These data are used to analyse the spread of digital cultural activities, attitudes towards digital culture, willingness to pay, digital skills, language use online, accessibility assessments and socio-demographic differences. The qualitative part consists of a 30-day cultural consumption diary study and in-depth interviews with 20 Latvian residents aged 19–84. These data provide contextual insight into how digital cultural practices are embedded in everyday life, how people evaluate them, and how they relate to in-person cultural experiences.

The report is structured around several thematic questions. It first explains why digital cultural consumption needs to be studied and how it is defined in this research. It then provides a general overview of digital cultural participation in Latvia, including the spread of different activities and the relationship between digital and in-person participation. Separate sections examine residents’ attitudes towards digital culture, the perceived advantages of digital content, willingness to pay for digital cultural products, accessibility of digital content, screen time, confidence in digital skills and the languages used in digital environments. The final analytical part, based on diary and interview data, identifies different modes and patterns of digital cultural engagement.

The findings show that digital cultural consumption is widely present in Latvia, but it is uneven in both structure and meaning. Around two thirds of residents have engaged in at least one digital cultural activity during the last year. The most common activities are convenient and easily accessible forms of consumption, such as listening to music online, watching films or series, purchasing tickets and following or accessing cultural content digitally. By contrast, activities that require more active participation, creative involvement, specific skills or purposeful use of institutional digital resources — such as digital collections, archives, online discussion groups or co-creation activities — are much less common.

A key conclusion is that **digital cultural consumption in Latvia most often functions as a complement to in-person culture rather than as its replacement.** Most digitally active residents also participate in cultural activities in person. Only a small share of the population engages in culture exclusively online. This suggests that digital tools are important for finding information, maintaining interest, accessing content more flexibly and extending cultural experiences, but in-person culture continues to hold strong social and emotional value.

The study also shows that **digital cultural participation is socially uneven.** Younger, more educated, economically secure and professionally active groups are more likely to engage in digital

cultural activities. Lower involvement is observed among older residents, pensioners, people with lower income or lower education, some regional audiences and groups with lower digital confidence. This means that digital accessibility cannot be reduced to the availability of internet access or the existence of online content. It is also shaped by skills, motivation, devices, language, income, platform habits and the visibility and findability of Latvian cultural content.

Another important finding concerns **the value and monetisation of digital culture**. Residents are more willing to pay for in-person cultural experiences than for digital cultural content. Digital content is often expected to be free or low-cost, even when it is used regularly. Willingness to pay increases when users clearly perceive added value, such as high quality, convenience, exclusive content, a trusted platform or a clear difference from free alternatives. Therefore, digital cultural products do not automatically create stable income opportunities for the cultural sector; in many cases their main function may be audience development, access, education, heritage availability or public value rather than direct revenue generation.

The diary and interview data show that digital cultural consumption cannot be understood only through activity lists. The same activity may take different forms depending on attention, purpose, context and the meaning given to it by the user. **The study identifies several modes of digital cultural engagement:** focused cultural consumption, digital creative self-expression, digital participation, digital socialisation, information seeking, aimless browsing, background consumption and entertainment-oriented engagement. This distinction helps show that digital culture may be meaningful, social, creative and purposeful, but it may also be routine, low-attention, backgrounded or mainly used for relaxation and distraction.

Based on the findings, **recommendations are addressed to three groups:**

1. **For cultural policy**, the report recommends developing digital culture as a complement to in-person culture, planning targeted accessibility measures for different audience groups, strengthening the visibility of Latvian cultural content online and supporting digital skills.
2. **For cultural organisations**, the recommendations focus on making digital content easy to find and use, clearly communicating its value, linking digital content with in-person experiences, designing content for different modes of use and working more actively with audiences that currently use digital culture less.
3. **For researchers**, the report recommends using more precise indicators, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, studying not only whether digital activities are used but also how and why they are used, and maintaining enough continuity in indicators to allow comparisons over time.

Overall, the report concludes that digital cultural development should not be understood simply as placing more cultural content online. Digital cultural consumption in Latvia is a layered and socially differentiated field. Its cultural policy relevance lies in understanding how digital tools can support access, strengthen the visibility of Latvian cultural content, connect with in-person participation and create more meaningful opportunities for different groups of residents to engage with culture.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. Digital culture is widely present in the everyday lives of Latvia's residents, but is little used as a space for participation or co-creation

- 1.1. Approximately **two thirds** of Latvia's residents have carried out at least one online cultural activity during the past year.
- 1.2. In the digital environment, **everyday, easily accessible and convenient forms of consumption dominate** — listening to music, watching films, concert streams and purchasing tickets. **Activities that require more active involvement are used much less often** or are linked to the digital resources of cultural institutions, such as museum collections, virtual exhibitions, archives, catalogues, discussion groups or contributing to digital collections.
- 1.3. The digital environment currently functions mainly as a channel for consumption and access, **rather than as a widely used space for participation or co-creation.**

2. Digital cultural activities are used more often by those who already actively use the digital environment in everyday life

- 2.1. Younger, more educated, professionally active and economically better-off residents are more likely to engage in digital cultural activities. The digital cultural offer most easily **reaches those audiences who already have everyday experience in the digital environment** and sufficient skills to use it.
- 2.2. Because the most popular digital activities are **familiar everyday formats**, while the digital resources of cultural institutions are used significantly less often, digital accessibility in itself does not yet mean broad use of cultural resources.

3. Residents most often choose hybrid cultural consumption, which includes both in-person and digital content consumption

- 3.1. Digital cultural consumption in Latvia most often **complements in-person culture rather than replacing it.** Most residents who participate in digital cultural activities combine them with in-person cultural experiences. Only a small number engage only in digital activities.
- 3.2. In-person and digital cultural content more often have different forms of use, meanings and functions. Digital tools help residents find information, choose events, buy tickets, follow cultural institutions and consume content at a time convenient to them. In turn, **in-person culture, in residents' view, retains a distinctive social, emotional and experiential value.**

4. The popularity and frequency of use of digital cultural content depend on the type of different products and services, and can vary greatly, as shown by the cases of reading and film viewing.

- 4.1. For example, **e-book reading, digital library use and e-book purchases in Latvia are still characteristic of a relatively small audience.** They are more often used by younger, more highly educated, economically better-off residents and those living in urban environments.
- 4.2. **Digital reading solutions currently complement the existing circulation of books,** rather than replacing printed books or libraries as physical cultural infrastructure. Printed books and in-person library use still dominate in society more broadly.
- 4.3. In audiovisual content consumption, by contrast, there is no clear consolidation of one dominant viewing channel or mode; hybrid channel choice habits are characteristic: **television** still retains an important role, **cinema** continues to be a significant in-person experience, while **streaming platforms and other digital channels** expand opportunities to watch content at a convenient time and place.
- 4.4. Latvia's residents **combine several channels** — television, cinema, Latvian and foreign platforms, archives, digital rental and search engines. **The reach of Latvian films and**

series is closely linked to whether they are available in the channels that residents already use in their everyday viewing habits.

5. Digital cultural content is assessed as convenient and accessible, but not always as emotionally equivalent to in-person experience

- 5.1. Residents most often associate digital cultural content with **convenience, reachability, flexibility and a wider choice**.
- 5.2. The digital format is **less often perceived as emotionally equivalent to an in-person cultural experience**.
- 5.3. In-person cultural events are still more often associated with being together, atmosphere and stronger emotional involvement.

6. Willingness to pay for digital cultural content is lower than for in-person culture

- 6.1. **In-person culture has a more clearly established value in society**, for which residents are willing to allocate financial resources.
- 6.2. Digital cultural content is more often perceived as a **free or lower-priced** service, even when it is used regularly.
- 6.3. This does not diminish the importance of digital content; rather, **the habit of paying for cultural content is less established in the digital environment** than in in-person cultural consumption.

7. The use of digital content in itself does not yet create stable opportunities for revenue generation

- 7.1. Some residents **use digital content regularly, but this does not yet mean they are willing to pay for it**.
- 7.2. Willingness to pay for digital content depends more on whether the user **sees clear added value** — quality, convenient access, a trusted platform, exclusive content or a substantial difference from the free offer.
- 7.3. **Paid digital cultural services better reach audiences with greater digital experience, higher education and greater ability to pay**. Therefore, the audience for such services may be narrower than the overall user base of digital cultural content.
- 7.4. At the same time, it should be taken into account that **for some digital solutions the main function is not direct revenue generation**, but expanding cultural accessibility, reaching audiences, education, heritage accessibility or providing public value.

8. Differences in digital accessibility are not only a question of access to the internet and technologies

- 8.1. **Internet access** in itself does not yet guarantee active digital cultural consumption and participation. Digital cultural accessibility should be understood more broadly than only as a question of technology or infrastructure.
- 8.2. Differences also arise at the level of **skills, suitability of devices, language, income, motivation, content recognisability and platform use habits**.
- 8.3. Particularly pronounced **differences are visible** among older audiences, pensioners, lower-income groups, parts of Russian-speaking audiences and respondents without citizenship of the Republic of Latvia.
- 8.4. Screen-time data show that **residents engaged in digital cultural activities are generally more intensive users of the digital environment**. This means that digital cultural content most easily reaches those who already regularly spend time online and feel relatively confident in the digital environment.
- 8.5. **By contrast, residents with low or irregular internet use may not notice the digital cultural offer** or may not use it even when it is technically available.

9. Language in the digital environment affects what cultural content residents notice and use

- 9.1. **Latvia's digital environment is not a unified language space**, because online content is consumed mainly in Latvian, Russian and English. Accordingly, Latvian cultural content in the digital environment competes not only with global English-language content, but also with a broad Russian-language digital space.
- 9.2. Latvian is the most commonly used language of online content and the most important for the reach of Latvian cultural content; however, its use is not even across all social groups.
- 9.3. Some residents remain in the Russian-language information and cultural content space in the digital environment, as the use of Russian online is more clearly visible among Russian-speaking respondents, respondents of Russian ethnicity, respondents without citizenship of the Republic of Latvia, and audiences in Riga and Latgale.
- 9.4. English is particularly characteristic of younger audiences. Unlike Russian, the use of English is less linked to a single ethnolinguistic community and more to age, the education environment, living in cities and the consumption of global digital content.

10. Measuring digital cultural consumption requires distinguishing not only activities, but also modes of engagement and the meanings with which they are used

- 10.1. Identifying digital cultural consumption through a quantitative list of activities alone is not sufficient.
- 10.2. Activities are often carried out as part of everyday digital content consumption, which makes it difficult to distinguish and measure cultural content.
- 10.3. One and the same activity can belong to very different modes of digital cultural engagement depending on how it is carried out and what meaning the user assigns to it.

11. Digital cultural content can be assigned value in different degrees

- 11.1. The diary study **identified eight modes of digital cultural engagement**: *focused cultural content consumption, digital creative self-expression, digital participation, digital socialisation, information seeking about culture, aimless browsing, background consumption and entertainment-oriented engagement*.
- 11.2. These show that **consumers can assign different value to digital cultural content** — it may be meaningful and perceived as useful, but it may also be consciously perceived as low-value and entertainment-oriented consumption whose function is not equated with the social and emotional significance of in-person culture.
- 11.3. Accordingly, **time spent is not an indicator of a high-quality cultural experience in the digital environment**, but rather the value and meaning that users themselves assign to it.
- 11.4. **In measurements of digital cultural consumption, attention should be paid** not only to whether an activity has been carried out during the past year, but also to the way it is carried out — with what attention content is used, whether it is perceived as valuable, whether it creates a connection with in-person culture, or whether it serves communication, entertainment, information acquisition or self-expression. This would provide a more precise understanding of digital cultural consumption habits than measurements of activity frequency alone.
- 11.5. **Such measurements are more resource-intensive than previous monitoring approaches**. For this reason, they may require a less frequent but more targeted and comprehensive measurement of digital cultural consumption — for example, once every three years — in order to monitor digital cultural consumption in Latvian society.

12. Digital cultural consumption patterns show that audiences do not have the same relationship with digital content

- 12.1. The study **identified four digital cultural consumption patterns**: *limited or rejecting digital engagement, selective but uncertain digital engagement, hybrid everyday digital engagement and digital culture as an everyday cultural environment*. These are not hierarchical; rather, they describe different configurations of how people combine digital and in-person culture and what values they assign to both in their everyday routines.

- 12.2. **Digital cultural consumption occupies a different place in different people's everyday lives.** For some, digital culture is insignificant or secondary; for others, it is interesting but not fully used because of a lack of skills, confidence or information. For some residents, digital content is a familiar part of everyday life, but often in the form of background or entertainment consumption. For audiences for whom digital culture functions as an everyday cultural environment, the online space also becomes a space for creativity, participation, socialisation and cultural experience.
- 12.3. **Low digital engagement is not always linked to a lack of interest.** Sometimes it reflects a clear preference for in-person culture; in other cases, uncertainty, a lack of skills and insufficient information about suitable digital content.
- 12.4. **Long-term and frequent use of digital technologies does not automatically mean deep and sustained cultural engagement either,** because in everyday life the digital environment may be present as habits of background consumption, entertainment or distraction.
- 12.5. Qualitative research indicates that these differences are not formed only by age or skills. They are also **linked to people's values, attitudes towards in-person culture, digital self-confidence, income, education, place of residence, life stage, family situation, lack of time and everyday responsibilities.** Further quantitative testing of this assumption would be necessary.
- 12.6. **The same digital offer can mean very different things to different audiences.** One group may need simpler access and practical support; another — better information about available content; another — higher-quality and more easily noticeable content on the platforms they already use; while more digitally active audiences may need broader opportunities for participation, co-creation, creative self-expression and socialisation.

The development of digital culture should not be based only on the digitalisation of content. The cultural consumption of Latvia's residents is currently characterised most precisely not by a transition from in-person to digital culture, but by the coexistence of both forms. Digital content expands access, helps people find information, sustains interest and makes it possible to consume culture more flexibly, while in-person culture retains a distinctive social and emotional significance. Therefore, the digital cultural offer should complement in-person culture, and its accessibility should also be considered — it should be easy to find, understandable, technically convenient, linguistically accessible, trustworthy and adapted to different modes of use.