



Ruthless Research

Final report:

Luminate stakeholder survey 2025

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Submitted by:

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About Ruthless Research

Ruthless Research is an Edinburgh-based independent research consultancy, through which Ruth Stevenson provides a range of qualitative and quantitative research solutions to organisations who work for the benefit of the community.

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Introduction

Background

Luminate wished to consult with people who engage with creative ageing work via a stakeholder survey, to inform their work and to track progress against their strategic plan.

Through the survey, Luminate wanted to understand:

- How relevant stakeholders are currently engaging in creative activity with older adults (aged 50+);
- How current issues have affected and continue to affect these stakeholders;
- How these stakeholders perceive Luminate and its work.

A version of this survey was first conducted in 2022 with the intention that it would be repeated periodically and that results from 2022 would provide a baseline. This survey, in 2025, is the second time that the survey has been conducted and year-on-year comparisons have been made where possible and appropriate.

Methodology

Independent researcher Ruth Stevenson designed, managed and analysed an anonymous web survey to gather feedback from stakeholders.

The survey was open to those who answered 'yes' to the question:

Do you (or the organisation that you work for) ever organise or deliver creative events or activities for older adults (aged 50+) in Scotland?

The survey was available for completion between 7th March and 1st April 2025.

In total 87 people completed the survey in full, which is very similar to the 85 completes recorded in 2022.

Findings are summarised in this report.

About the respondents

To provide context for the findings, this section of the report describes those that responded.

In total the survey received 87 complete responses from people agreeing that 'yes' they (or the organisation that they work for) ever organise or deliver creative events or activities for older adults (aged 50+) in Scotland.

The respondents were based across 26 of the 32 Scottish regions, most frequently Edinburgh (27%), Glasgow (11%) and Highland (11%). This is similar to the pattern recorded in 2022 where respondents were based across 22 regions, most frequently Edinburgh and Glasgow.

These individuals held the following roles:

Base: All	2022 (85) %	2025 (87) %
I am an artist / creative practitioner	42	51
I work for an arts organisation	25	31
I work for a charity or community group	28	24
I work for a care provider	15	8
I work for an adult learning provider	2	2

In 2025 the respondents were most often artists / creative practitioners (51%, higher than 42% in 2022), followed by staff at arts organisations (31%) or charities or community groups (24%).

Some respondents held multiple roles. 51% of the respondents were practicing creatives, 60% of the respondents worked in non-artistic contexts, and 17% specified that they were both (similar to 18% in 2022).

Working with older adults was the main role focus for 40% of respondents, much lower than the 54% recorded in 2022.

The respondents worked with older adults using the following artforms:

Base: All	2022 (85) %	2025 (87) %
Music	52	56
Craft	39	40
Visual arts	35	34
Dance	26	29
Theatre	19	22
Literature/Storytelling	38	21
Heritage	20	20
Film	20	13
Gallery/museum	20	13
Library	16	10
Digital technology/games	20	8
Multi-artform	16	6
TV / Broadcasting	12	3

In 2025 the artforms most often used when working with older adults were music (56%), craft (40%) and visual arts (34%) – which were also in the top four in 2022. Most used multiple artforms when working with older adults.

Notable differences between artforms worked with in 2025 as compared to 2022 were:

- Literature/Storytelling – fell by 17 percentage points
- Digital technology/games – fell by 12 percentage points
- Multi-artform - fell by 10 percentage points

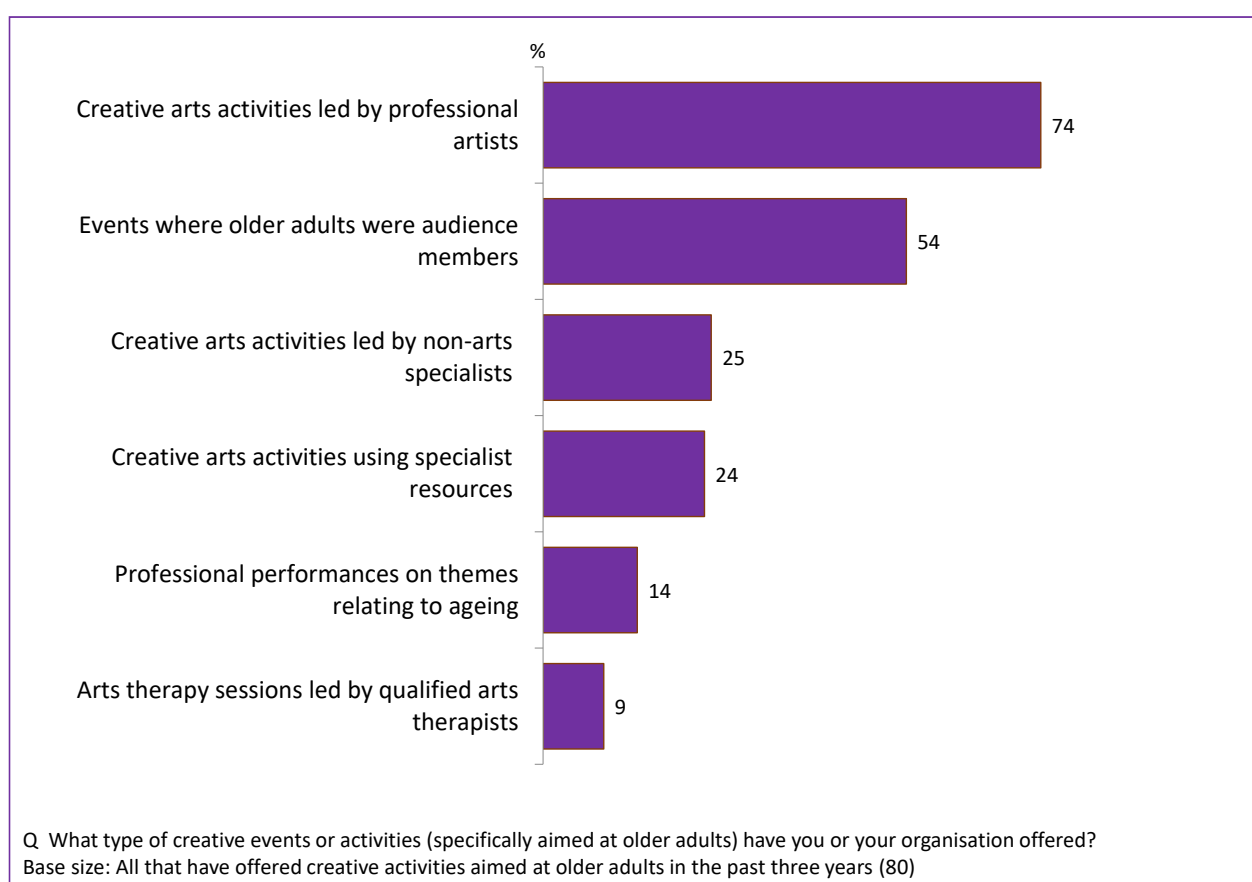
Patterns in engagement with older adults

The following section of the report explores patterns in engagement with older adults.

Recent work with older adults

92% of respondents (slightly higher than 87% in 2022) told us that they had offered any creative events or activities specifically aimed at older adults (aged 50+) in the past three years. The following section of the report explores the way that this sub-set had recently worked with older adults.

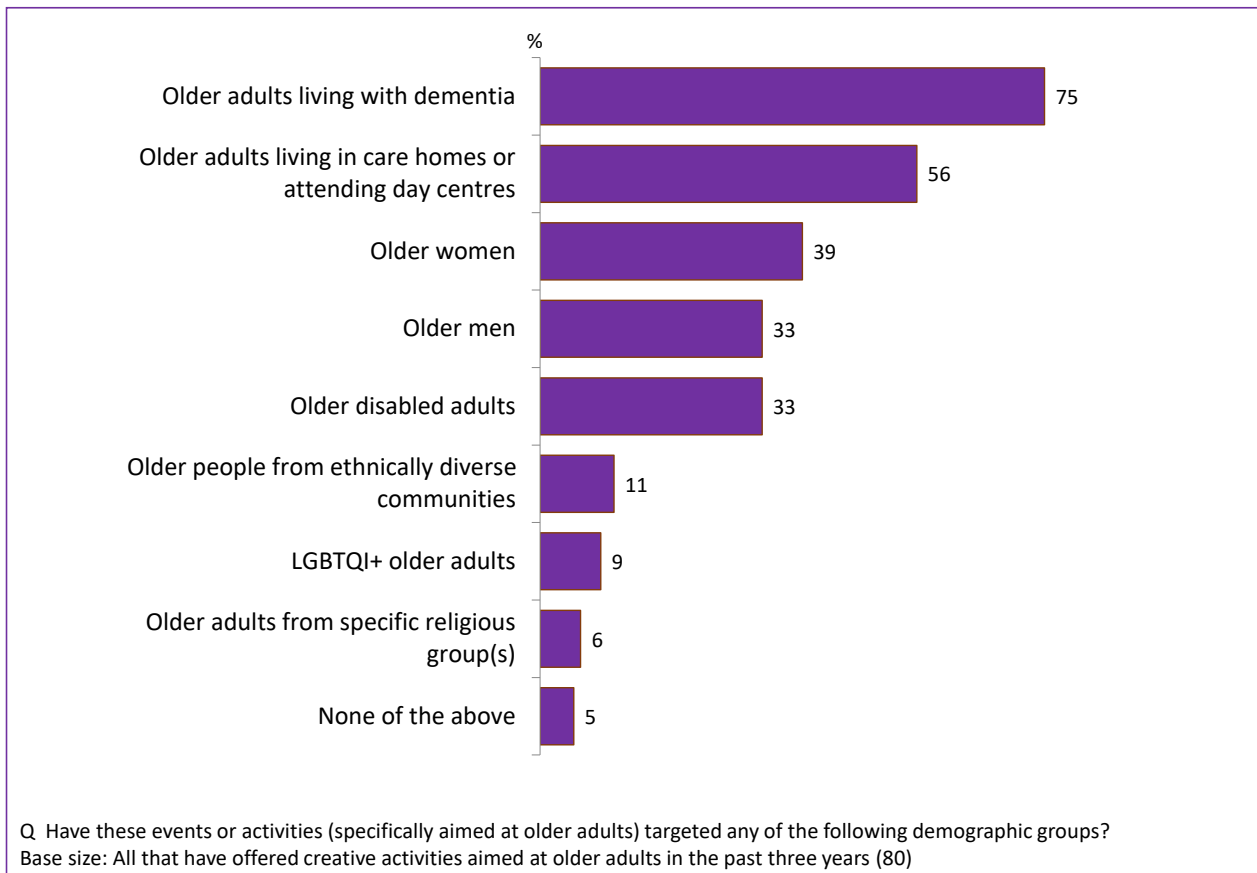
We asked the respondents to tell us what type of creative events or activities (specifically aimed at older adults) they had offered in the past three years:



Overall the pattern in types of recent work was the same in 2022 and 2025, in terms of ranking by prevalence.

By some margin (and likely influenced by the high proportion of practitioners responding) the activities most often offered were creative arts activities led by professional artists (74%, compared to 68% in 2022). Next most frequently offered were events where older adults were audience members (54%, slightly higher than 43% in 2022) and creative arts activities led by non-arts specialists (25%, much lower than 42% in 2022). Fewer had offered creative arts activities using specialist resources (24%, compared to 19% in 2022) and professional performances on themes relating to aging (14%, compared to 19% in 2022), with fewest having offered art therapy sessions led by qualified arts therapists (5%, the same as in 2022).

We asked the respondents whether these events or activities had targeted any particular demographic groups of older adults:



Overall the pattern in targeting was similar in 2022 and 2025, in terms of ranking by prevalence.

The groups of older adults most often targeted were older adults living with dementia (75%, compared to 69% in 2022) and older adults living in care homes or attending day centres (56%, similar to 53% in 2022).

Relatively fewest had offered events or activities specifically targeting LGBTQI+ older adults (9%, similar to 8% in 2022), older adults from specific religious groups (6%, compared to 9% in 2022) and older people from ethnically diverse communities (11%, slightly lower than 20% in 2022).

In 2025 (for the first time asking in this way) we asked the respondents whether they provide any of this creative work for older adults online. Around one in five (21%) provide any creative work for older adults online, which comprises of 20% who provide less than half of this work online and 1% (a single respondent) who provide all of this work online.

A new question for 2025, we asked the respondents what influences their decision-making around whether or not to provide creative work for older adults online. This was an open question and responses were written in. Key themes arising were as follows:

Base: All	2025 (87) %
Reasons not to provide online work	75
- Importance of in-person connection	20
- Feeling that artform works less well online	13
- Preference of commissioning organisation	7
- Preference of participants	6
- Access barriers for participants	5
- Technical delivery challenges	5
- Preference of practitioner	2
- Working in a care home setting	2
Reasons to provide online work	6
- Access needs of participants	6

The vast majority of the respondents provided reasons why they did not provide creative work for older adults online, with 75% describing at least one reason not to.

The primary reason given for this was the feeling that an in-person connection was important (20%), for example:

“We get regular feedback from participants about the importance of physical social spaces.”

“A large part of our work is designed to bring people together and to 'get out of the house'.”

“We believe contact with real people face-to-face is the best way to stimulate discussion, memories and interaction.”

“We are about the human-to-human connection.”

The next most frequently given reason was the feeling that their artform works less well online (13%), for example:

“We find that in person practice works better for our structured art classes.”

“My classes work best in person, tap dance classes.”

“I feel that the type of work I do (sensory dance/movement & interdisciplinary work) is best facilitated live in person.”

“It is a practical workshop so needs to be delivered in person rather than online.”

“The nature of the engagement we want our activity to facilitate (listening and making music together) is much more effective in person.”

Preferences of commissioners (7%), participants (6%) and practitioners (2%) were also cited, as were participant access barriers (5%) and technical delivery challenges (5%).

Only 6% expressed their reasons for choosing to provide online work, with reasons relating to the access needs of their participants:

“Sometimes when the participants are housebound for whatever reason.”

“One of the projects that we do is online for people with severe health problems.”

“Limits due to caring responsibilities.”

“People who might not be comfortable in a face-to-face group because of neuro-difference and other reasons were comfortable in a group online.”

“People who could not or do not drive - we have very little public transport in this largely rural area.”

We also asked the respondents how their creative work for older adults had been funded:

Base: All that have offered creative activities aimed at older adults in the past three years	2022 (74) %	2025 (80) %
Project funding from a grant or trust	59	63
Contribution from core budget	50	40
I have volunteered my own time	32	23
Fundraising	26	23
Participants pay to engage	23	22

In 2025 as in 2022 the work with older adults was most often funded through project funding from a grant or trust (63%, similar to 59% in 2022), or contribution from core budget (40%, lower than 50% in 2022).

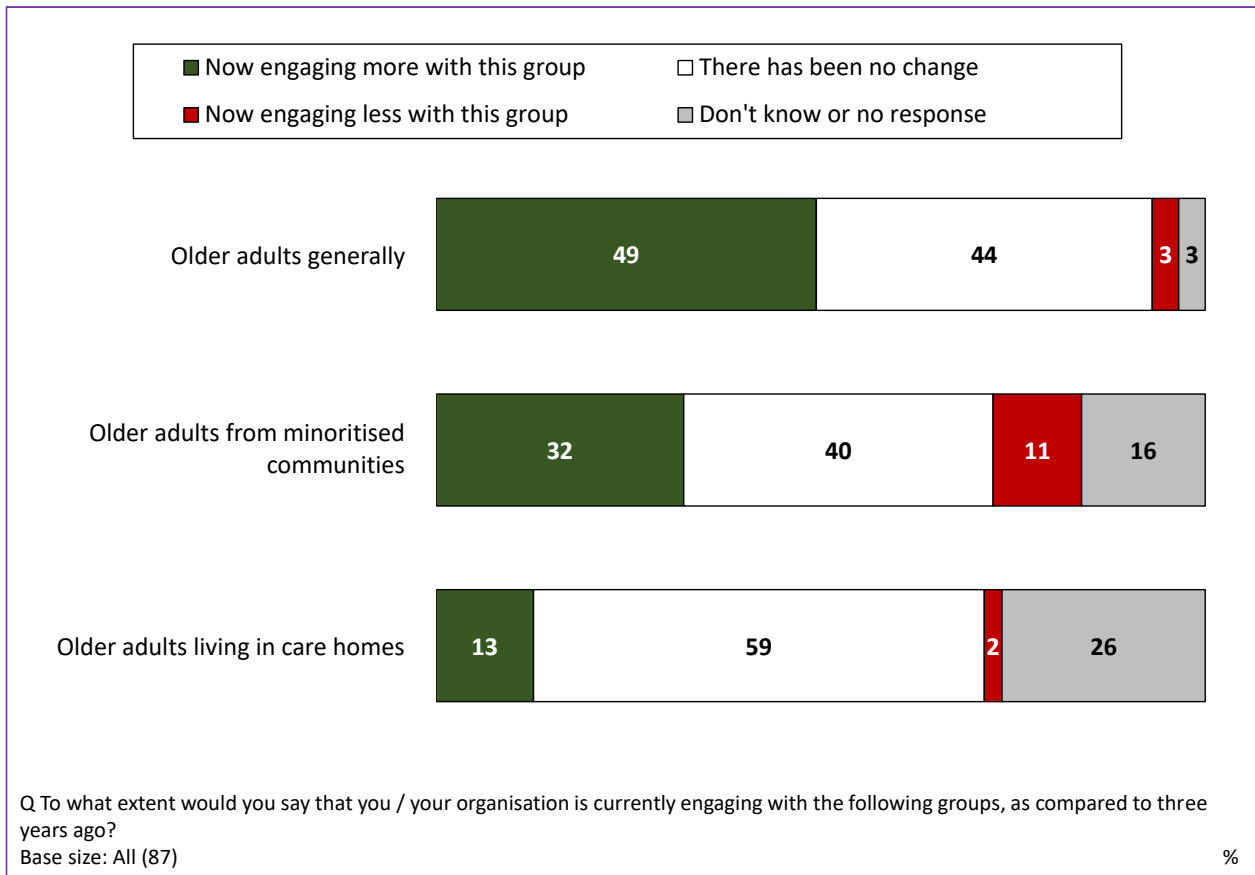
Notable differences between artforms worked with in 2025 as compared to 2022 were:

- Contribution from core budget – fell by 10 percentage points
- I have volunteered my own time – fell by 9 percentage points

Approach to working with older adults

The following section of the report explores the way that the respondents are currently approaching working with older adults.

We asked the respondents to tell us the extent to which they are currently engaging with particular groups of older adults, as compared to three years ago:

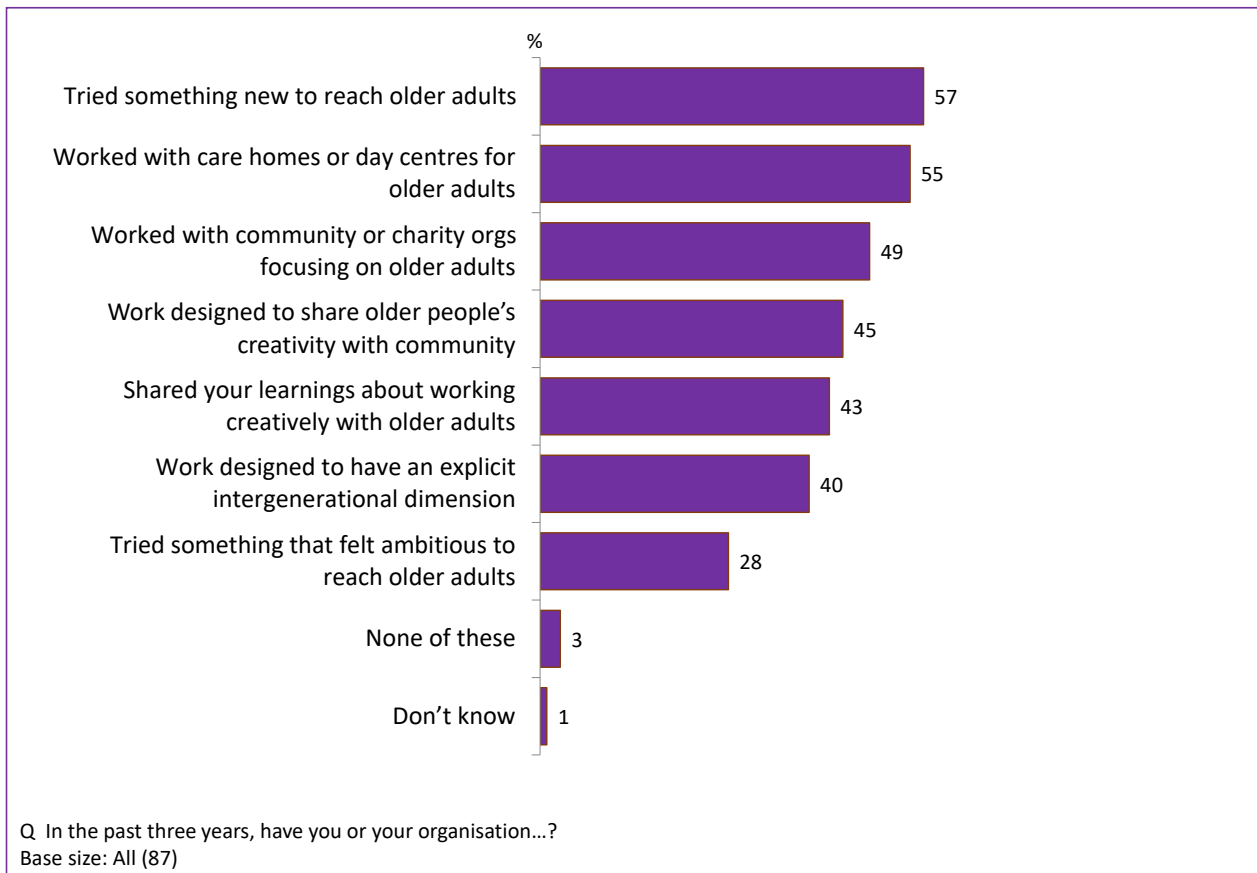


Almost half (49%) of the respondents told us that they were now engaging with older adults more than they had been three years ago, with 44% observing no change and 3% engaging less.

Around a third (32%) were now engaging with older adults from minoritised communities more than they had been three years ago, with 40% observing no change and 11% engaging less.

13% were now engaging with older adults living in care homes more than they had been three years ago, with 59% observing no change and 2% engaging less.

We asked the respondents about the novel ways that they had worked creatively with older adults in the past three years:



Overall the pattern in novel methods was similar in 2022 and 2025, in terms of ranking by prevalence.

In the past three years the respondents had most often tried something new to reach older adults (57%, lower than 68% in 2022), worked with care homes or day centre for older adults (55%, similar to 56% in 2022) and worked with community or charity organisation focusing on older adults (49%, similar to 52% in 2022).

Just over a quarter of the respondents (28%) had tried something that felt ambitious to reach older adults in the past three years, much lower than 45% in 2022.

Only 3% of the respondents had tried none of these approaches in the past three years.

We asked the respondents to tell us whether they had ever consulted or engaged with adults with particular characteristics as part of their planning and development process in the past three years:

Base: All	2022 (85) %	2025 (87) %
Any specifically sought	61	59
- We specifically sought out artists or creative practitioners aged 50+	25	16
- We specifically sought out other cultural professionals aged 50+	7	6
- We specifically sought out audience members or community participants aged 50+	55	52
Any incidentally engaged with	46	54
- We incidentally engaged with artists or creative practitioners aged 50+	26	46
- We incidentally engaged with other cultural professionals aged 50+	15	29
- We incidentally engaged with audience members or community participants aged 50+	32	34
Any engaged with artists or creative practitioners aged 50+	44	48
Any engaged with other cultural professionals aged 50+	22	26
Any engaged with audience members or community participants aged 50+	69	77
None of these	11	6
Don't know	6	8

In total 59% of the respondents (similar to 61% in 2022) had specifically sought out older adults as part of their planning and development process in the past three years, including audience members or community participants (52%), artists or creative practitioners (16%, lower than 25% in 2022) and other cultural professionals (6%).

54% of the respondents (slightly higher than 46% in 2022) had incidentally engaged with older adults as part of their planning and development process in the past three years, including audience members or community participants (34%), artists or creative practitioners (46%, much higher than 26% in 2022) and other cultural professionals (29%, much higher than 15% in 2022).

6% of the respondents did not consult or engage with adults with these particular characteristics as part of their planning and development process in the past three years.

We also asked the respondents whether they are planning to increase the amount of work that they do for and with older adults in general in the future. Six in ten respondents (60%, very slightly lower than 66% in 2022) said that yes, they are planning to increase the amount of work that they do for and with older adults in general in the future.

We asked the respondents what sort of help or support would be useful if they were looking to develop their work with and for older people. This was an open question and responses were written in. Key themes arising were as follows:

Base: All	2022 (85) %	2025 (87) %
Access to more funding	21	46
Networking and partnership opportunities	15	21
Access to more training and CPD opportunities	11	18
Formalised ways to connect with freelance practitioners	-	9
Support with promotion and publicity of activities	7	5
Opportunities to share best practice	6	5
Access to spaces for delivery	-	5
Ideas for activities and creative practice	14	3
Guidance: Working with dementia	7	3
Research and evidence	4	3
Guidance: Working with diverse groups	6	2
Support for freelancers	5	1
Guidance: Working in care homes	13	0

In both 2025 and 2022 the type of help and support most often requested was greater access to funding to enable more work to happen with older adults, however at 46% in 2025 this was much higher than the 21% recorded in 2022.

The next most often mentioned support needs in both 2025 and 2022 were networking and partnership opportunities (21% in 2025, slightly higher than 15% in 2022).

Access to more training and CPD opportunities was also a key need for 18% in 2025, slightly higher than 11% in 2022.

Notably fewer respondents felt that they needed ideas for activities and creative practice in 2025, at 3% in 2025 as compared to 14% in 2022.

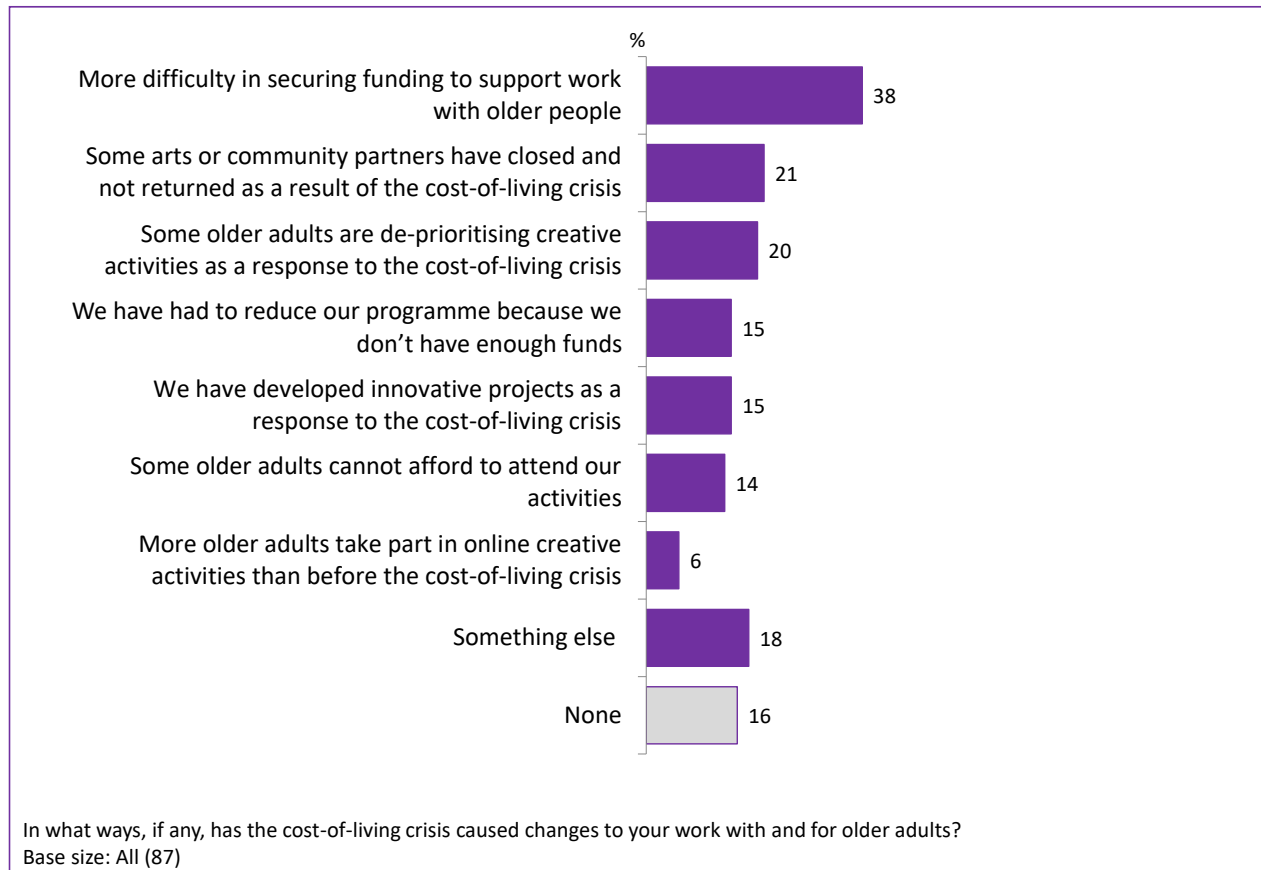
Mentioned for the first time in 2025, 9% felt that they would benefit from formalised ways to connect with freelance practitioners and 5% would like access to spaces that they could use for delivery.

The impact of current issues on work with older adults

The following section of the report explores the impact that current issues had on creative work with older adults in Scotland.

Impact of the cost-of-living crisis

New for 2025, we asked the respondents to tell us about any ways that the cost-of-living crisis has caused changes to work with and for older adults.



The cost-of-living crisis has caused changes for the majority (84%) of respondents, and these have mainly been negative changes. The most frequently experienced changes were: More difficulty in securing funding to support work with older people (38%), some arts or community partners having closed and not returned as a result of the cost-of-living crisis (21%), and some older adults de-prioritising creative activities as a response to the cost-of-living crisis (20%).

6% of the respondents had experienced a positive change – that more older adults are taking part in online creative activities than before the cost-of-living crisis.

Other changes noted included prohibitive transport costs and difficulty booking spaces. Four respondents described the impact that the cost-of-living crisis has had on practitioner income:

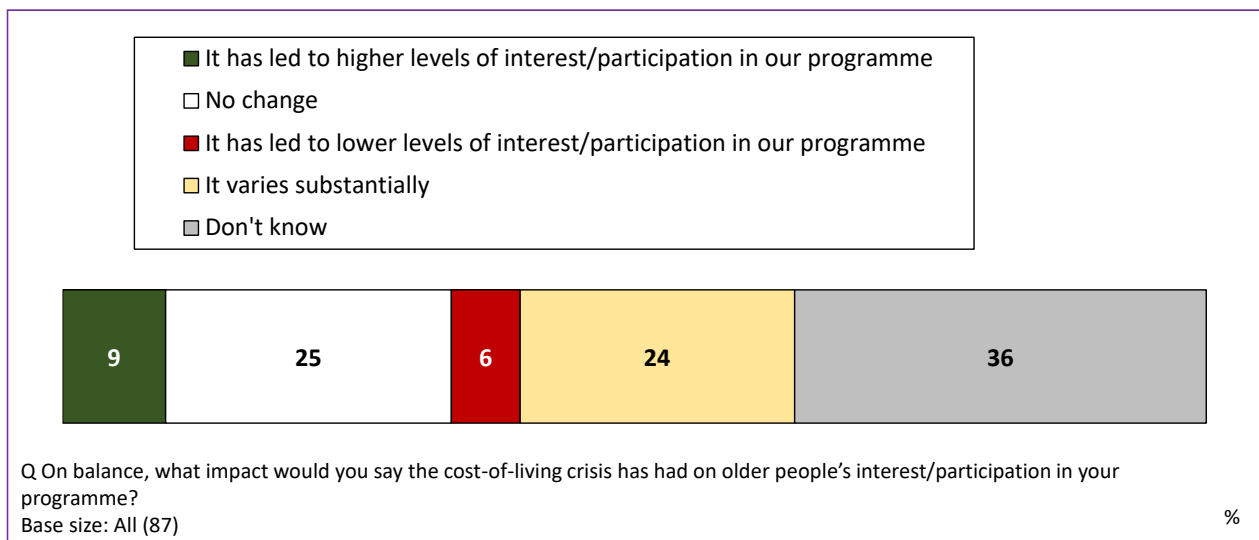
“I have had to hold down workshop fees meaning I have less income myself.”

“As wages have not increased in line with cost-of-living increases, it is more and more stressful to get by doing this type of work as a creative practitioner.”

“I can't afford to volunteer, need to be paid for all work now.”

“My pay as an artist was cut, but I was expected to deliver the same programme.”

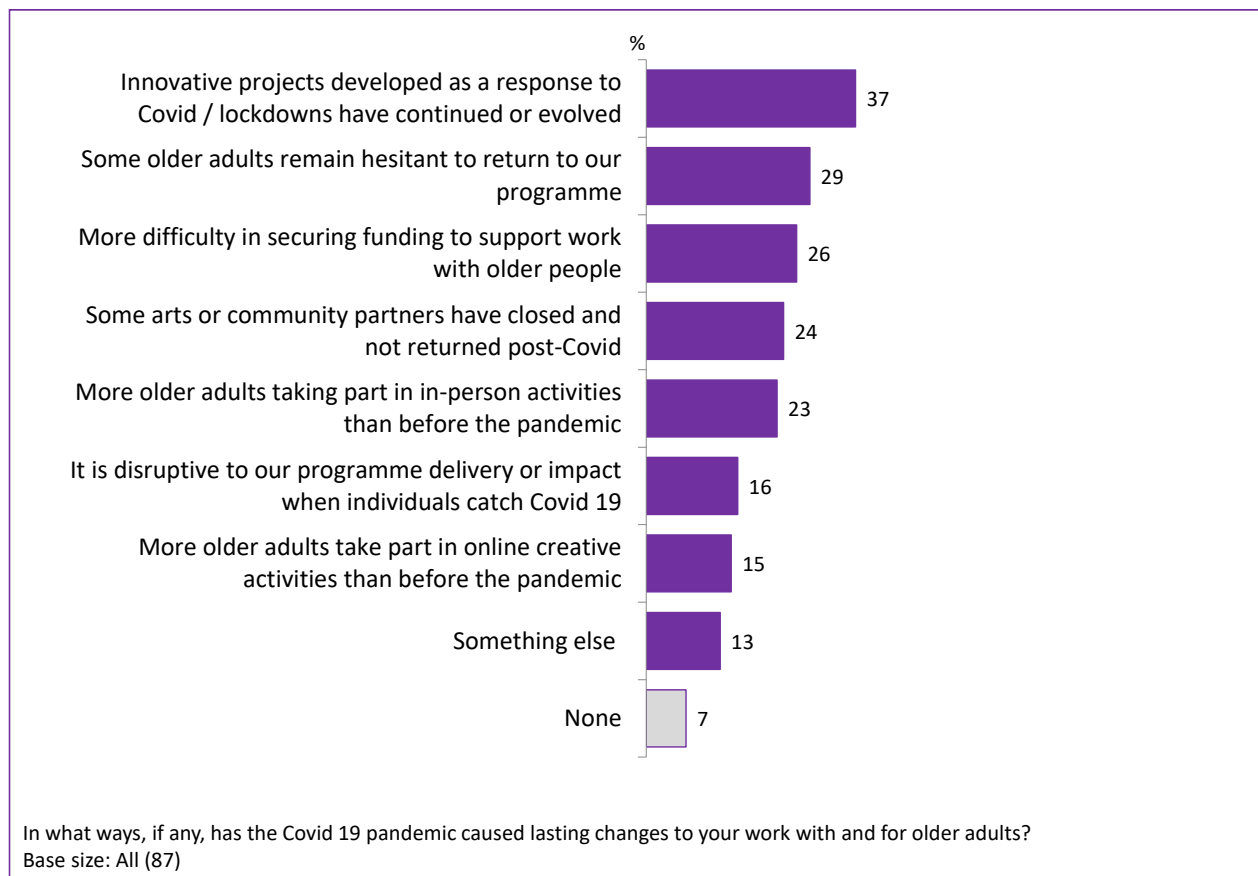
We asked the respondents what impact the cost-of-living crisis has had on older people's interest/participation in their programme.



Few respondents felt that the cost-of-living crisis had caused a definitive change in levels of older people's interest/participation in their programme, with 9% feeling that it had led to higher levels of interest/participation and 6% feeling that it had led to lower levels of interest/participation. Around a quarter (24%) felt that it varies substantially, and 36% said that they didn't know.

Lasting impact of Covid 19

Also new for 2025, we asked the respondents to tell us about any ways that the Covid 19 pandemic crisis has caused lasting changes to work with and for older adults.



The cost-of-living crisis has caused changes for the majority (93%) of respondents, and these have been both positive and negative changes. 54% of respondents had experienced positive lasting changes, most often that innovative projects developed as a response to Covid / lockdowns have continued or evolved (37%) and that more older adults are taking part in in-person activities than before the pandemic (23%). 59% of respondents had experienced negative lasting changes, most often that some older adults remain hesitant to return to programmes (29%) and more difficulty in securing funding to support work with older people (26%).

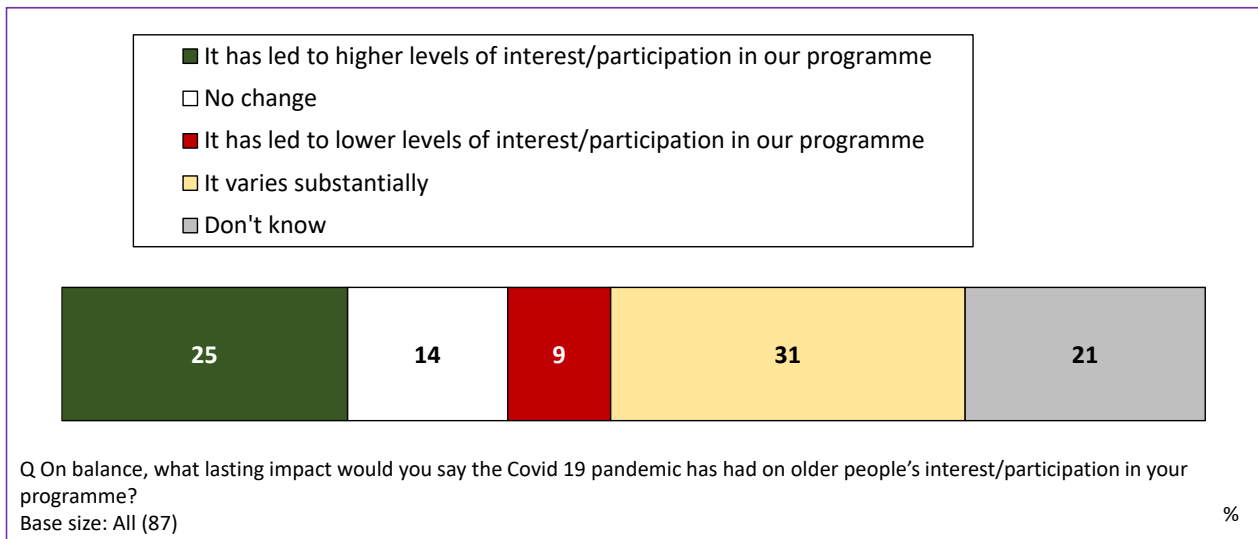
Several respondents commented on the time that it has taken to re-build creative programmes for older adults post-Covid:

“It has taken time to rebuild the volunteer capacity as various people are no longer around or active.”

“Audience/participant numbers are still rebuilding.”

“It has taken a while, post-Covid, to build up a regular programme of events in care homes again.”

We asked the respondents what lasting impact the Covid 19 pandemic has had on older people's interest/participation in their programme.

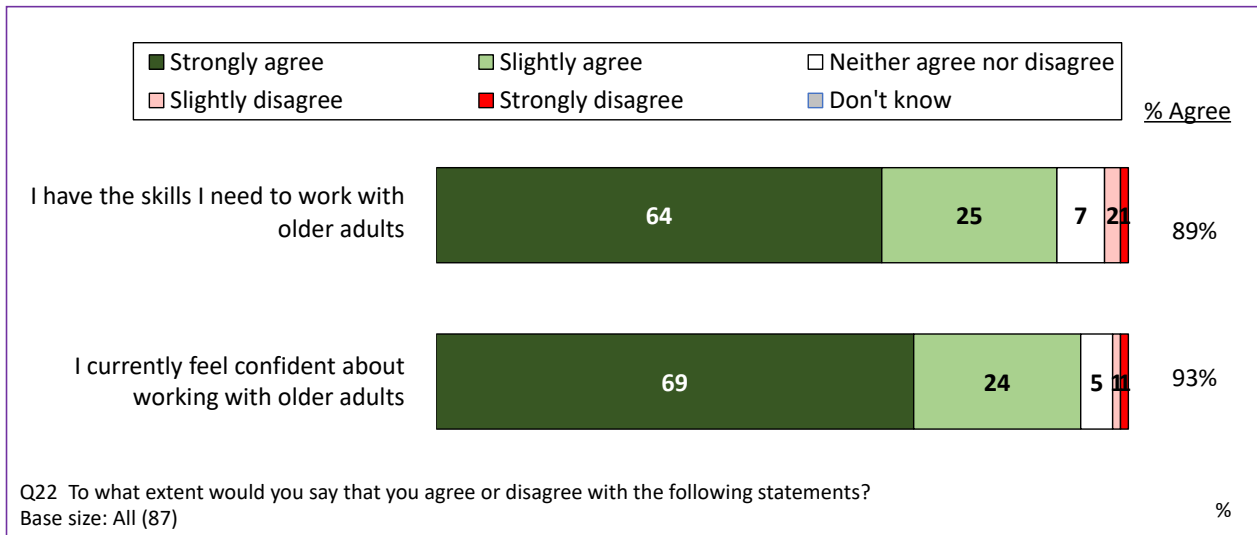


For a quarter of respondents (25%) the Covid 19 pandemic led to higher levels of interest/participation in their programme, with 9% feeling that it had led to lower levels of interest/participation. Almost a third (31%) felt that it varies substantially, and 21% said that they didn't know.

Current levels of confidence and experience working with older adults

The following section of the report explores current levels of confidence and experience working with older adults.

We asked the respondents to tell us about their current levels of confidence and experience working with older adults:

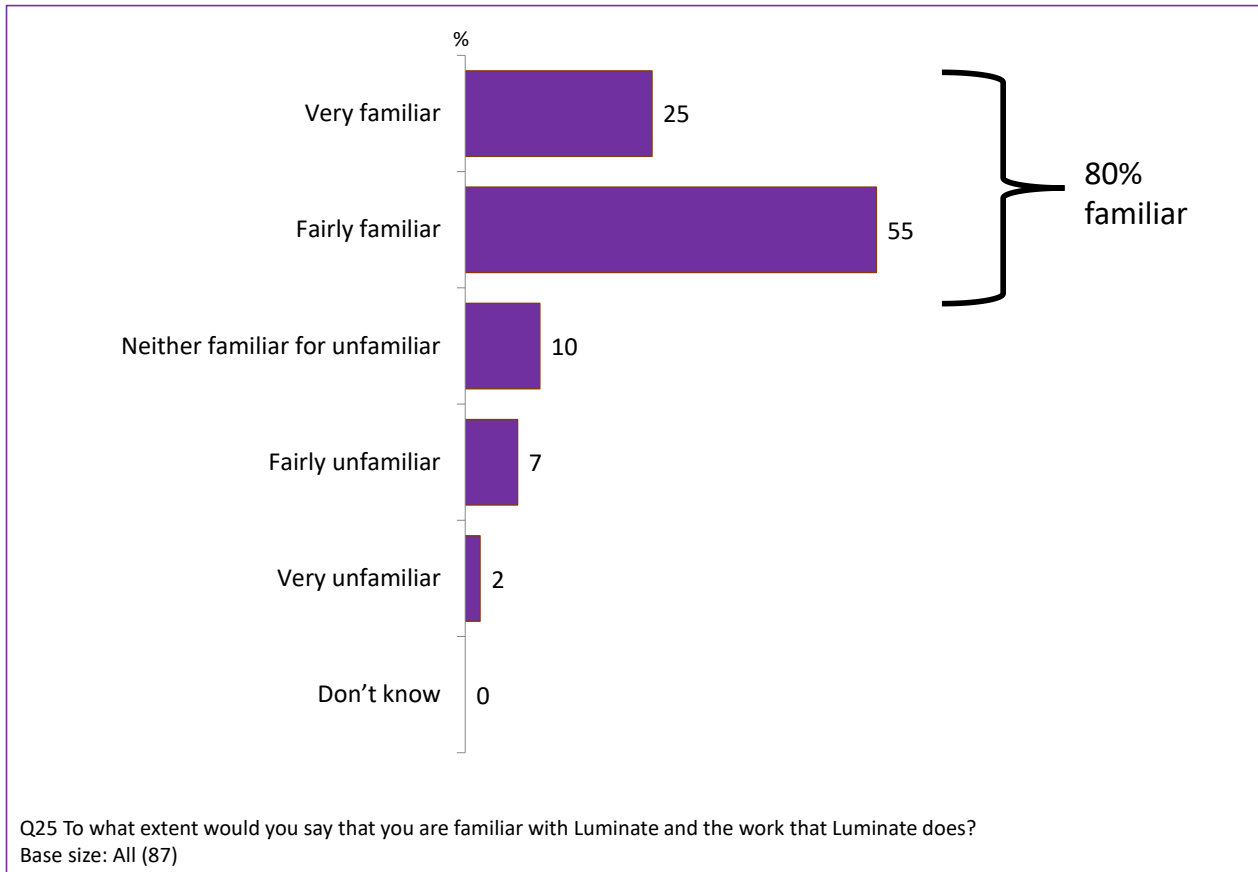


The respondents currently feel very positive about their ability to work with older adults, with 89% agreeing that they currently have the skills that they need to work with older adults (similar to 90% in 2022) and 93% agreeing that they currently feel confident working with older adults (slightly higher than 88% in 2022).

Perceptions of Luminate

The following section of the report evaluates perceptions of Luminate, and Luminate's position.

We asked the respondents how familiar they feel they are with Luminate and the work that Luminate does.



There was a good degree of familiarity with Luminate amongst the respondents in 2025, with 80% saying that they were familiar with Luminate and the work that Luminate does. This is an increase from 71% in 2022.

Only 9% were currently unfamiliar with Luminate and the work that Luminate does, down from 17% in 2022.

We asked the respondents to tell us in what ways they had engaged with Luminare in the past three years:

Base: All	2022 (85) %	2025 (87) %
Read about or heard about Luminare’s activities	65	71
Read Luminare’s e-newsletter	41	51
Viewed Luminare’s website	46	49
Read one of Luminare’s articles or reports	33	45
Met a Luminare staff member	29	40
Followed Luminare on social media	38	38
Attended a training session organised by Luminare	-	37
Engaged with or read about Luminare’s Dementia Inclusive Singing Network project	-	31
Attended an in-person event led by Luminare	5	30
Worked in partnership with Luminare	20	23
Sought advice from Luminare	20	14
Received a bursary from Luminare	-	8
I have not / my organisation has not engaged with Luminare	16	8
Attended a remote event led by Luminare	32	7
Don’t know	4	3

In total 89% of the respondents had engaged with Luminare in the past three years (higher than 80% in 2022), and on average each had engaged in 4.4 of the listed ways in 2025.

As in 2022, the methods of engagement most often utilised were to have read or heard about Luminare’s activities (71%, higher than 65% in 2022), to have read Luminare’s e-newsletter (51%, higher than 41% in 2022), and to have viewed Luminare’s website (49%, similar to 46% in 2022).

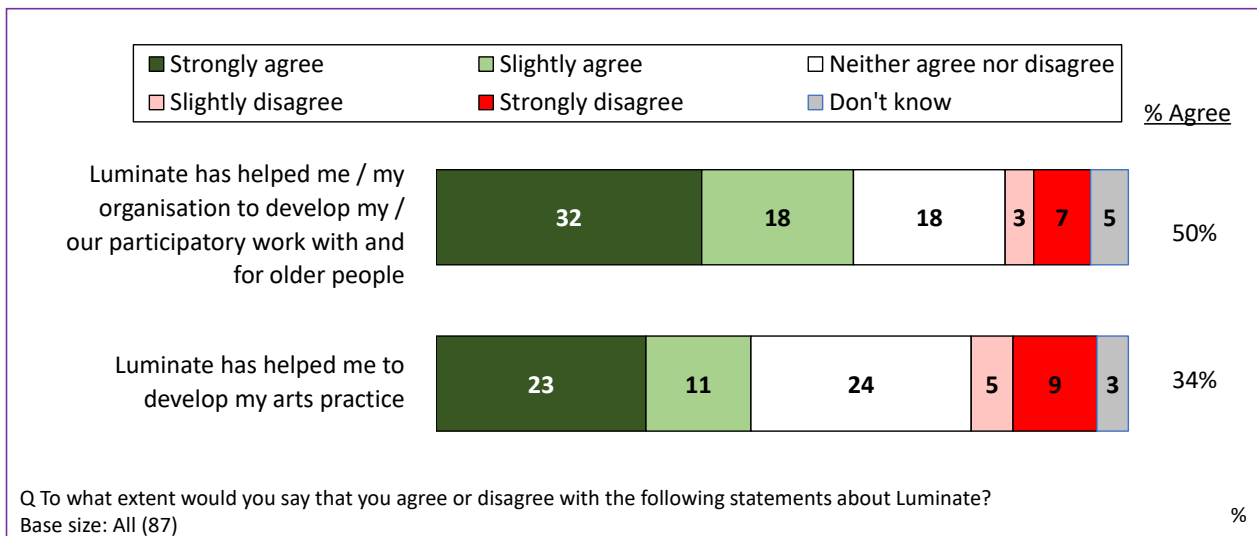
8% of the respondents had no engagement with Luminare in the past three years, and 3% responded don’t know.

Notable differences in engagement in 2025 as compared to 2022 were:

- Attended an in-person event led by Luminare – rose by 25 percentage points
- Attended a remote event led by Luminare – fell by 25 percentage points

- Read one of Luminare’s articles or reports - rose by 12 percentage points
- Met a Luminare staff member- rose by 11 percentage points

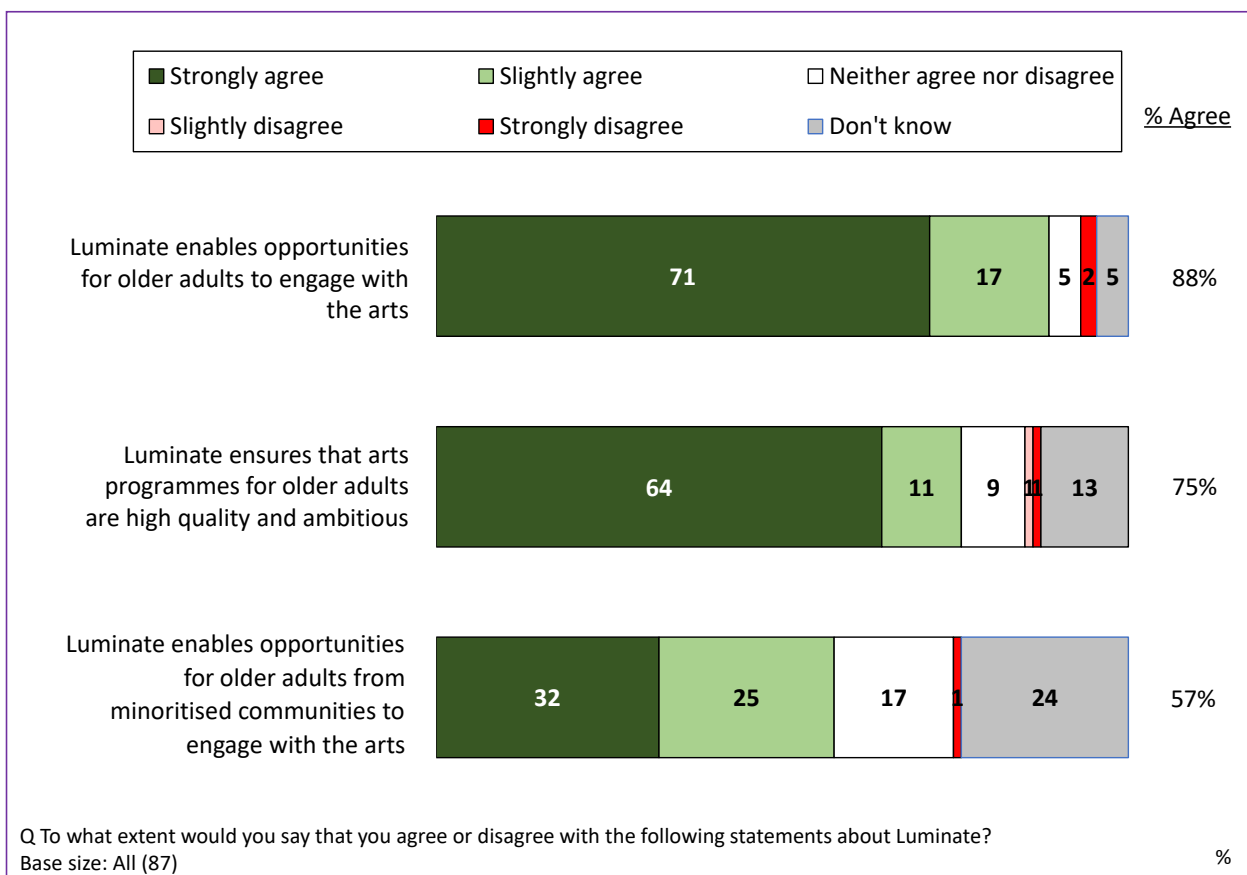
We asked the respondents about the support that they had received from Luminare:



50% of respondents (similar to 48% in 2022) agreed that Luminare has helped them or their organisation to develop their work with and for older people.

A new question in 2025, around a third (34%) agreed that Luminare has helped them to develop their arts practice. This was slightly higher - 42% - amongst artists / creative practitioners.

We asked the respondents to evaluate Luminat’s performance against some of its priority actions:



On the whole the respondents were positive about Luminat’s work.

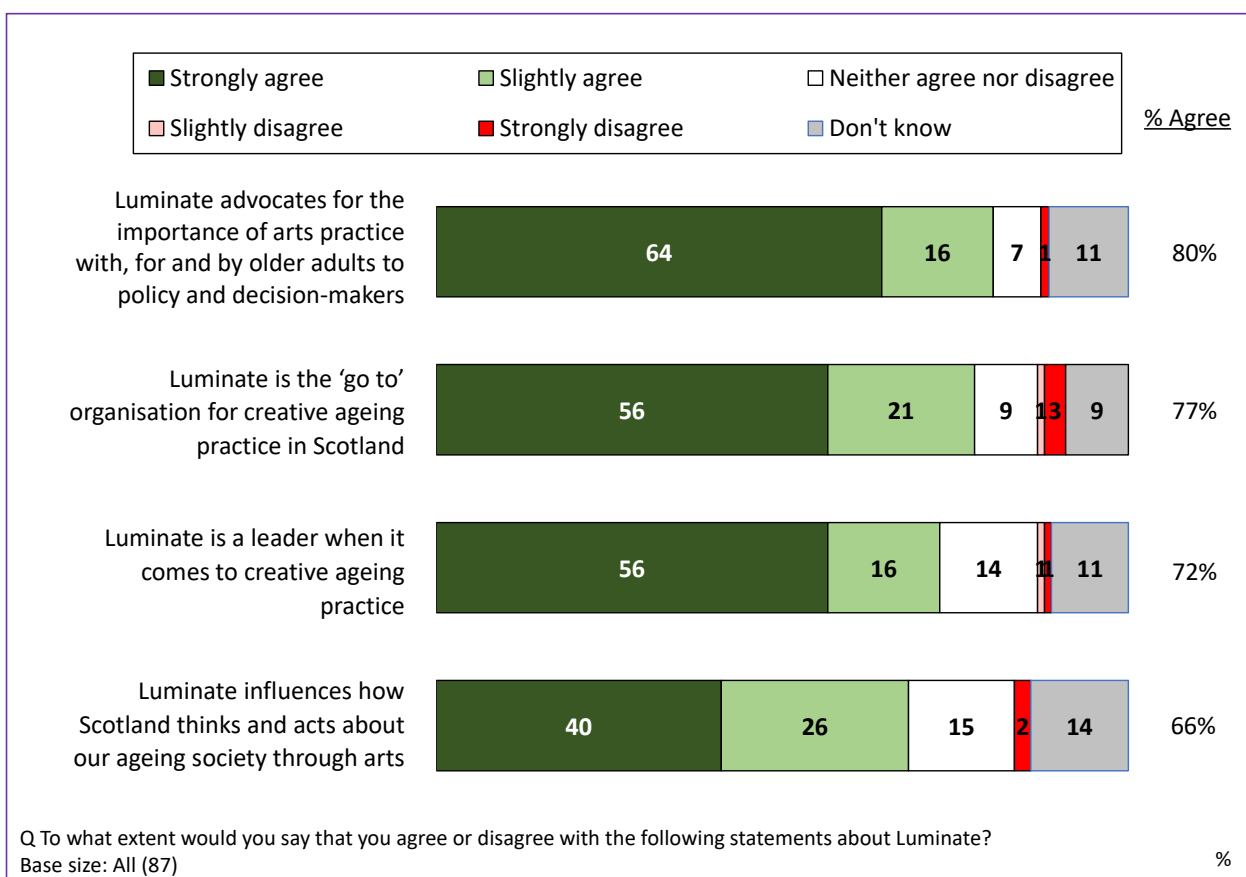
Almost nine in ten (88%) agreed that Luminat enables opportunities for older adults to engage with the arts, which is Luminat’s key aim, a substantial rise from an already positive 73% in 2022.

In addition 75% agreed that Luminat ensures that arts programmes for older adults are high quality and ambitious, again a rise from 66% in 2022.

Strength of agreement was very strong and with few negative responses for these statements, indicating positivity towards Luminat.

A new question for 2025, 57% of respondents agreed that Luminat enables opportunities for older adults from minoritised communities to engage with the arts. Notably, 24% gave a don’t know response demonstrating unfamiliarity with this aspect of Luminat’s work.

We also asked the respondents to evaluate Luminare’s strategic influence:



More than seven in ten respondents agreed that Luminare is a leader when it comes to creative ageing practice (72%, an increase from 59% in 2022) and that Luminare is the 'go to' organisation for creative ageing practice in Scotland (77%, an increase from 61% in 2022).

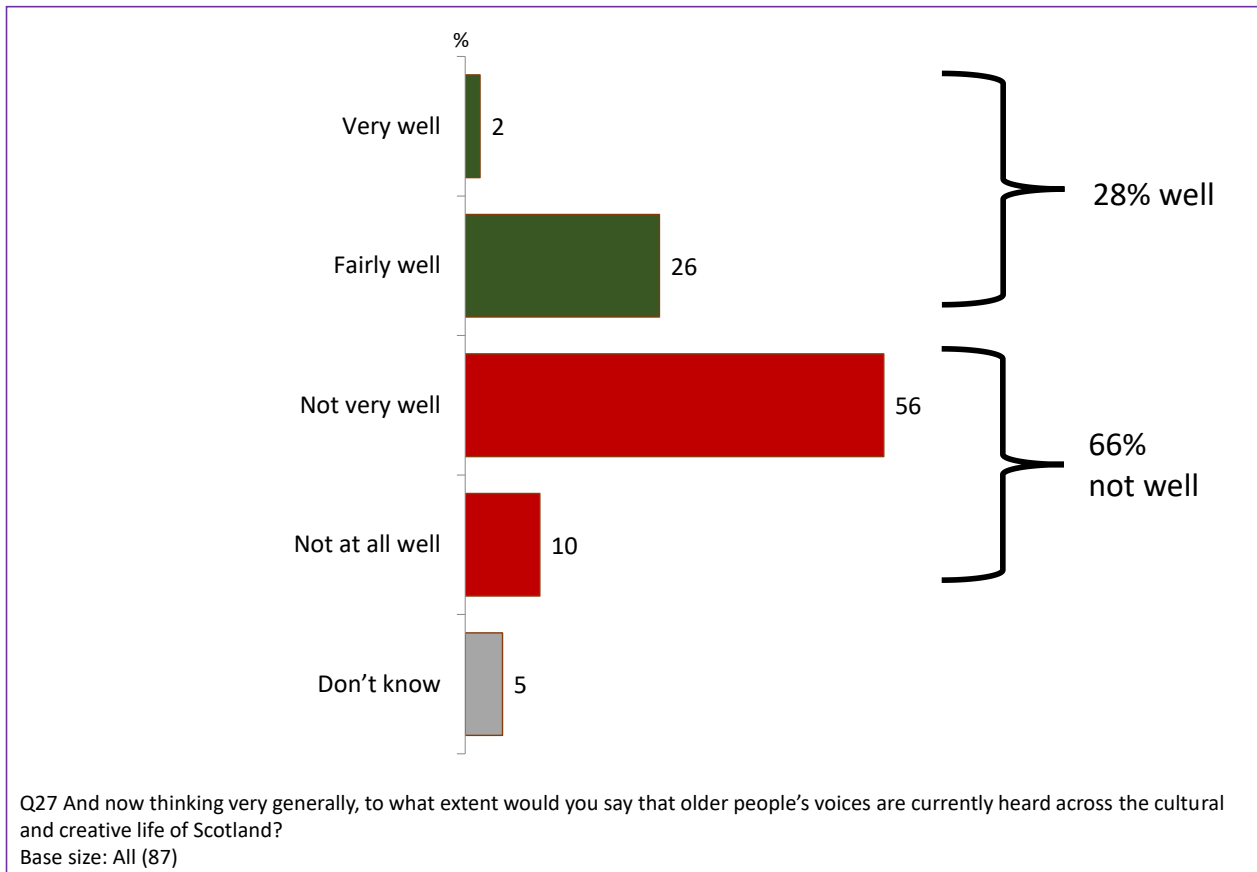
Additionally, 80% of respondents agreed that Luminare advocates for the importance of arts practice with, for and by older adults to policy and decision-makers (an increase from 69% in 2022) and 66% agreed that Luminare influences how Scotland thinks and acts about our ageing society through the arts (similar to 65% in 2022).

The level of negative response was minimal and non-positive responses tended to be neutral or don't know, indicating unfamiliarity with Luminare's work.

Older people's voices in Scotland

The following section of the report explores opinions around older people's influence on cultural and creative life in Scotland.

Finally, we asked the respondents to tell us the extent to which they feel that older people's voices are currently heard across the cultural and creative life of Scotland:



Perceptions around older people's voices had not changed between 2022 and 2025.

The majority of the respondents do not feel that older people's voices are currently heard across the cultural and creative life of Scotland, with 66% saying that this is happening not well compared to 67% in 2022.

Just over a quarter (28%, compared to 27% in 2022) felt that older people's voices are currently well heard across the cultural and creative life of Scotland, including only 2% feeling that older people's voices are heard very well.

Concluding remarks

In many ways the sector is very similar in 2025 when compared to 2022. However a huge success identified via this survey has been the increase in familiarity with Luminate – rising from 71% in 2022 to 80% in 2025 – along with increased levels of recognition around Luminate’s strategic contributions:

- 77% agreed that Luminate is the ‘go to’ organisation for creative ageing practice in Scotland - a rise of 16 percentage points.
- 88% agreed that Luminate enables opportunities for older adults to engage with the arts - a rise of 15 percentage points.
- 72% agreed that Luminate is a leader when it comes to creative ageing practice - a rise of 13 percentage points.
- 80% agreed that Luminate advocates for the importance of arts practice with, for and by older adults to policy and decision-makers - a rise of 11 percentage points.
- 75% agreed that Luminate ensures that arts programmes for older adults are high quality and ambitious - a rise of 9 percentage points.

Maintaining (or improving!) the profile of Luminate should continue to be a priority for Luminate in the coming years.

Our 2022 sector survey naturally focused on the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic, however several years on restrictions have long been lifted and our focus is now around understanding any lasting legacy. It is interesting to learn that around half of respondents had experienced positive lasting changes (most often that innovative projects have continued or evolved) and around half of respondents had experienced negative lasting changes (most often securing funding, and that some older adults remain hesitant to return to programmes). New provision of online creative activities for older people was fuelled by the Covid 19 lockdowns, and it is notable that five years on only 21% are currently offering online activities. When asked about their decision-making the majority provided justifications for their artistic or ethical preference to provide activities in-person.

60% of the respondents told us that they are planning to increase the amount of work that they do for and with older adults in the future which is a trend for Luminate to be aware of. We asked the respondents what support they need, and as in 2022 the cited priorities included funding opportunities, networking and guidance. Luminate should consider what role they can play in addressing these needs, particularly in the context of the current cost-of-living crisis which is affecting the vast majority of stakeholders and participants in one way or another. It is a concern that 38% of the respondents are experiencing more difficulty in securing funding to support work with older people as a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis, and that in some cases this is being passed on to practitioners as a reduction in their income. Perhaps related, compared to 2022 relatively fewer respondents are currently working with older adults as their main role focus, and relatively fewer currently receive a contribution from core budget for this work, and it may be helpful to investigate and/or monitor the reasons behind this.

Only 28% of the respondents felt that older people’s voices are currently well heard across the cultural and creative life of Scotland, and there has been no change in this respect since 2022. It is to be expected, however, that any national change will take time to achieve and that there is therefore still work to do.