

WHY WE ENGAGE: ATTENDING, CREATING, AND PERFORMING ART

Based on an Analysis of the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts
and the 2016 General Social Survey





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National Endowment for the Arts
Office of Research & Analysis
September 2020

National Endowment for the Arts

400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506
arts.gov

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Cover photo: In Baltimore, Maryland, visitors attend a movie screening at the American Visionary Art Museum as part of its series "Flicks on the Hill". Photo by Nick Prevas



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PREFACE



The National Endowment for the Arts commissioned this research report long before COVID-19 struck the United States. Originally, we planned to discover what Americans give as their top reasons for taking part—or not taking part—in various arts activities. By looking at data from two large-scale surveys, we hoped to learn about the importance of these motivations in people’s decisions to attend live arts events, or to stay home or go elsewhere to make art of their own. Such insights, we reasoned, would help arts organizations and cultural policymakers reach audiences more effectively.

The report you are now reading is the result of this analysis. The main findings were bound to interest arts practitioners and funders under normal circumstances. In our time of pandemic, though, the statistics offer even greater value: they affirm the enduring social appeal of arts participation in this country and they point the way to how the sector eventually will recover from economic hardship. They remind us that for most people the need to interact socially, to learn new things, and to feel personally creative, dwells at the heart of the individual arts experience. During a protracted period of shutdowns, and in the months immediately following, nonprofit arts organizations can build on these values while staying true to their own missions of improving public access to the arts.

Of all adults who attended a visual or performing arts event in the years surveyed, roughly 80 percent cited “socializing with family or friends” as a key reason for going. Indeed, across all generational groups, the youngest (“Generation Z”) and the oldest (“The Silent Generation”) were the most likely to report the lack of someone with whom to attend as a reason for not going to an arts event in general.

“Gaining knowledge or learning something new,” meanwhile, emerges as a top reason for attending visual art exhibits in particular. The unique location of the artworks also plays a factor. For performing arts attendance, the identity of the performer is an important draw. The opportunity to socialize motivates people to make art of their own, as does the need to “feel creative or creatively inspired.”

In the current environment, successful arts organizations must balance these demands with the public health and safety measures necessary for arts audiences to feel comfortable going out again in large numbers. At the same time, long-standing obstacles may gain further ground as and when physical distancing strategies and caps on attendance are widely adopted. Cost remains a barrier to arts attendance for many people, especially those of low income. So does an inability to travel to the physical venue. Arts managers, funders, and policymakers will need to reconcile the competing considerations as they deliver programs that can reclaim the arts’ compelling benefit as a force for social cohesion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mary Anne Carter". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mary Anne Carter
Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts

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ABOUT THE REPORT

Since 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts' Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) has captured nationally representative statistics on how often U.S. adults attend arts events or make their own art. Also sponsored by the Arts Endowment, recurring questions in the General Social Survey (GSS) gather U.S. data on attendance at visual and performing arts activities.

The present report analyzes both the 2017 SPPA and the 2016 GSS to produce important insights about self-reported motivations and barriers affecting adult patterns of arts participation. Key findings are:

1. According to both surveys, a top reason for participating in most arts activities was the desire to **socialize with family and friends**.
 - For adults who attended visual art exhibits in particular, **learning something new** as a reason was valued even more highly than socializing.
 - Among adults who made their own art, the most commonly reported reasons were to **feel creative or creatively inspired** or to **learn something new**.
2. The most commonly reported barrier to any type of arts participation was a **lack of time**.
 - For adults who had considered going to an art exhibit, but who ultimately chose not to, the second most common barrier was either a) the location was **too difficult to access**, or b) the exhibit **cost too much**.
 - For adults who had considered attending a performing arts event, the issue of cost was of greater significance than **location**.
3. There are important distinctions in how different U.S. subgroups perceive such drivers and deterrents.
 - An **inability to find someone to go with** was the most commonly reported barrier for adults born after 1997 ("Generation Z").
 - Members of racial or ethnic minority groups were significantly more likely than white respondents to identify **celebrating their cultural heritage** as a reason for attending arts events or making their own art. The same tendency applies to non-citizens and naturalized U.S. citizens versus U.S.-born citizens.
 - For adults in the lowest-income quartiles, **cost** naturally surfaced as a greater barrier than for other subgroups. Lower-income groups also were more likely to cite the difficulty of **getting to the venue** as a barrier to attending a specific art exhibit or performance.

This report updates findings from the 2015 Arts Endowment publication *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* (2015), which analyzed data from the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS). Findings from this new report will be useful to arts organizations, funders, and policymakers in their work to improve program effectiveness and to increase arts opportunities for all Americans.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a sequel to the National Endowment for the Arts' *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* (2015), the present report analyzes and presents findings from two nationally representative datasets: the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) and the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS). Together, these two surveys reveal perceived barriers and motivations affecting U.S. adult participation in a wide range of arts activities.

According to the new data, **socializing with friends or family** remains a top driver of arts participation (see *Exhibit 1*).

- This motivation was reported by 82 percent of attendees at *in-person arts events* and by 64 percent of people who personally performed art. It was also a key driver for art exhibit-goers (78 percent of them), though **gaining knowledge or learning something new** ranked higher as a motivation for this group.
- Socialization was also important to those who personally created visual artworks, but it was not as important a driver as to **feel creative or creatively inspired**. The latter motivation was the most important driver for creative writers.

Exhibit 1. Top Three Drivers¹ of Arts Participation, by Activity Type (2016 GSS, 2017 SPPA)

General Social Survey: 2016

| Of U.S. adults who attended performing arts events, the percentage who reported the following motivations | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Socializing with family or friends | 77% |
| 2. Wanting to see a specific or individual performer | 68% |
| 3. Experiencing high-quality art | 64% |

| Of U.S. adults who attended art exhibits, the percentage who reported the following motivations | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Gaining knowledge or learning something new | 84% |
| 2. Socializing with family or friends | 78% |
| 3. Wanting to see an exhibit at a specific location | 73% |

Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: 2017

| Of U.S. adults who attended in-person arts events, the percentage who reported the following motivations | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Wanting to spend time with family or friends | 82% |
| 2. Wanting to see a specific or individual performer or exhibit | 66% |
| 3. Supporting a community organization or event | 66% |

| Of U.S. adults who personally performed art, the percentage who reported the following motivations | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Wanting to spend time with family or friends | 64% |
| 2. Wanting to feel creative or creatively inspired | 38% |
| 3. Learning or experiencing something new | 30% |

| Of U.S. adults who personally created visual artwork, the percentage who reported the following motivations | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Wanting to feel creative or creatively inspired | 61% |
| 2. Wanting to spend time with family or friends | 59% |
| 3. Learning or experiencing something new | 50% |

| Of U.S. adults who did creative writing, the percentage who reported the following motivations | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Wanting to feel creative or creatively inspired | 79% |
| 2. Learning or experiencing something new | 56% |
| 3. Wanting to record an experience at a specific location | 35% |

¹ On the GSS and SPPA respondents provided ratings of between seven and nine different factors that may motivate participation in the arts.

As for perceived barriers to arts attendance, the most commonly reported one was a **lack of time** (see Exhibit 2). After lack of time, **cost** ranked as the greatest issue for would-be attendees of the performing arts, while **difficulty of getting to the venue** was as significant a barrier as cost for would-be attendees of art exhibits.

Exhibit 2. Top Three Barriers to Arts Attendance, Among U.S. Adults Who Had Expressed an Interest but Did Not Attend (2016 GSS)

| | Of U.S. adults who were interested in attending a specific performing arts event, but chose not to, the percentage who reported the following barriers | Of U.S. adults who were interested in attending a specific art exhibit, but chose not to, the percentage who reported the following barriers |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Lack of time | 54% | 61% |
| 2. Costs too much | 41% | 31% |
| 3. Too difficult to get there | 27% | 31% |

This report also compares the 2016 GSS data to data collected during the prior survey year (2012).

- Since 2012, the number of adults who did not attend an arts event but who **expressed an interest in attending** a performance or art exhibit grew from 28 percent to 40 percent.
- For would-be attendees of the arts in general, **lack of time** was the most frequently reported barrier to attendance. This factor played an even greater role for would-be attendees of the performing arts in 2016 than five years earlier.

Demographic analysis reveals that among all age groups², Generation Z adults and Millennials are among the most likely to take part in arts activities. They are also the most likely to report **socializing** as a key driver of their participation habits.

- Among adults who had been interested in attending a specific arts event but who ultimately chose not to, members of both Generation Z and the Silent Generation were the most likely to report the **lack of someone to go with** as a deterrent.

Adults in the lowest-income quartile were the most likely—among all income categories—to report **celebrating one’s cultural heritage** as a driver of their arts attendance.

- People of color were significantly more likely than white respondents to identify **celebrating their cultural heritage** as a reason for attending arts events or making their own art.
- This motivation was also reported frequently by **naturalized U.S. citizens** (as compared to U.S.-born citizens).

The lowest-income groups also were most likely to report the **difficulty of getting to the venue** as a barrier to arts attendance.

² Age ranges derive from the Pew Research Center (2019). The Silent Generation includes adults born from 1928 -1945, Baby Boomers 1946-1964, Generation X 1965-1980, Millennials 1981-1996, and Generation Z 1997 or later.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This report updates findings from *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* (2015), a National Endowment for the Arts report that analyzes data from the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS).

At the time of the 2015 report's release, declines in the historical rates of attendance at various types of arts events—as recorded by the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA)—had heightened the need to better understand the factors affecting participation. Since 2012, however, SPPA results have shown a slight uptick in most categories of arts attendance. While GSS data do not corroborate this trend, results from the 2016 GSS survey do show an increase in the percent of adults who are *interested* in attending specific arts performances and exhibits, but who ultimately choose not to attend.

As described below, these two surveys collect somewhat different data about U.S. arts activities. For example, while both surveys ask Americans about their motivations for participating in the arts, only the GSS collects information about perceived barriers to participation. Furthermore, the SPPA asks both about arts attendance and about personally creating or performing art; in contrast, the GSS gathers data only about arts attendance, not personal creation or performance. Examining findings across both datasets leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the reasons why Americans participate in the arts—or what deters them from participating.

Data Sources

This report examines data from the 2017 SPPA and the 2012 and 2016 waves of the GSS (Arts and Culture module) to understand the motivations and barriers that affect arts attendance and overall participation and how these patterns have changed over time.

General Social Survey (GSS)

The GSS is a nationally representative survey that has been conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago since 1972. The survey gathers information on public attitudes and opinions concerning a variety of social matters, and it tracks behaviors and attributes of the adult³ population of the United States. NORC has conducted biennial administrations of the GSS since 1994⁴.

In addition to a core set of questions featuring demographic items, the GSS includes modules targeting specific topic areas that vary by administration. Historically, the content of the arts questions has varied between administrations. However, due to the overall consistency of many questions in the two most recent core surveys and Arts and Culture module, it is now possible to assess trends over time. The Arts and Culture module has been fielded five times since 1993⁵. The present report focuses on the two most recent (2012 and 2016) survey administrations.

The Arts and Culture module collects data about arts attendance and about the motivations for and barriers to attendance. After answering questions about attending art performances and exhibits in the past year, respondents are asked follow-up questions about attending a particular event. Respondents are also asked about a number of potential motivations for attendance, which they are asked to rate as major, minor, or non-existent.

Additional questions ask respondents about perceived barriers to arts attendance. Respondents who did not attend an arts event in the last year—but who indicated interest in attending a particular event—are asked to identify the most important reason for their non-attendance.

3 Individuals age 18 and older

4 Biennial GSS administrations are supported by the National Science Foundation. The National Endowment for the Arts co-funded the creation and administration of the Arts and Culture module for the 2012 and 2016 GSS.

5 The Arts and Culture module previously was fielded in 1993, 1998, 2002, and 2012.

Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA)

This report focuses on data from the 2017 administration of the SPPA, a survey developed by the National Endowment for the Arts. The SPPA has been fielded seven times by the U.S. Census Bureau, typically as a supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). As part of the larger CPS, paired demographic and workforce variables are available to researchers.

The SPPA collects information on different arts-related behaviors of U.S. adults, such as in-person arts attendance (including performing arts events and exhibits), literary reading, personal creation or performance of artworks, arts education in adulthood, and arts consumption through electronic media.

The 2017 SPPA collected responses to motivation items focusing on in-person arts attendance, personal creation of art, and the personal performance of art. Unlike the GSS, SPPA respondents do not rate these motivations as major or minor, and they do not respond to perceived barriers to their arts participation. However, the SPPA does gather responses about perceived opportunities for access to the arts. Answers to these questions can be interpreted as possible barriers to arts participation, although the SPPA does not specifically ask if these factors affected the respondent's arts attendance patterns.

A Word on Definitions

When interpreting arts participation, it is important to understand how the arts were defined during the data collection. The SPPA uses four categories of arts participation, and the GSS uses two narrower attendance categories. Exhibit 3 provides an overview of the SPPA and GSS categories of participation for which data on motivations are available. Throughout the report we will refer to these categories.

Exhibit 3. Categories of Arts Participation Included in This Report

| SPPA Core II | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| In-Person Arts Attendance | Includes activities such as attending live performing arts events, fairs or festivals, and art exhibits. |
| Personal Creation of Visual Artworks | Includes visual arts activities such as painting, photography, digital arts creation, filmmaking, scrapbooking, and weaving. |
| Personal Performance of Art | Includes performing arts activities such as singing, playing an instrument, composing songs, dancing, acting, and directing. This category includes performing, practicing, and engaging in these activities in other ways such as dancing for fitness purposes. |
| Creative Writing | Includes writing of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or plays. |
| GSS | |
| Performing Arts Attendance | Attending live music, dance, or theater performances. |
| Art Exhibit Attendance | Attending an art exhibit such as a painting, sculpture, or photography exhibit. |

CHAPTER 2: DRIVERS OF PARTICIPATION

Taken together, the General Social Survey (GSS) and Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) offer important insights into why Americans participate in the arts. Across both surveys, the top motivating factors cited are (1) an opportunity to socialize with family and friends and (2) a desire to feel creative or creatively inspired. Some variations arise when respondents are asked about attending visual versus performing arts events. Of further interest, there are some broad similarities in the reasons that arts attendees and art-makers choose to participate in the first place.

Key Findings

- The most commonly reported motivation for arts participation is **socializing with friends or family**.
 - ◇ Eighty-two percent of in-person arts attendees and 64 percent of adults who personally performed art reported socializing as a motivation, according to the 2017 SPPA; and it was also reported as a motivation by 77 percent of performing arts attendees responding to the 2016 GSS.
 - ◇ Even among adults who personally created visual artworks (such as paintings, drawings, or scrapbooks), socializing with friends and family was a key driver of participation, with 59 percent of art-makers citing this motivation in the 2017 SPPA. By contrast, socializing was not a key driver of creative writing.
- The desire to **gain knowledge or learn something new** was another driver for adults who created or performed art and for creative writers, according to the SPPA. But the most commonly reported reason for art-making and writing fiction, nonfiction, poems, or plays was **wanting to feel creative or creatively inspired**.
 - ◇ Among attendees of art exhibits, the most commonly reported motivation was to gain knowledge or learn something new. More than 84 percent of exhibit-goers gave this reason, according to the GSS.
- **Low cost** was a motivating factor for fewer than 40 percent of art-goers, either in the visual or performing arts, according to the GSS.
- **Learning about or celebrating a family's cultural heritage** was the least or second-least reported motivation for participating in the arts in general, according to both the SPPA and GSS. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, this factor was especially important for some U.S. sub-populations.

Overview

As described in Chapter 1, respondents to both the 2017 SPPA and the 2016 GSS were asked about motivations for participating in the arts, although the two surveys differ in how they categorize those arts activities; they also offered different question and response options for tracking “motivations” behind arts participation.⁶ Exhibit 4 provides the percentage of individuals reporting each motivating factor by category of arts participation for the SPPA and the GSS. Socializing and spending time with family and friends is consistently the highest or second-highest ranked motivator across nearly all participation categories, with the exception of creative writing. Those who personally created visual artworks or did creative writing reported wanting to feel creative or creatively inspired as their highest motivators (61

⁶ In the 2016 GSS, respondents were asked what motivated their attendance for the most recent activity and to indicate if a motivating factor was a major or minor reason for attendance. In the 2017 SPPA, respondents were asked to indicate what factors impacted their decisions for four broad categories of arts participation: in-person arts attendance (includes performing and visual arts), personal participation in the performing arts, personal creation of art, and creative writing. Among the possible response options, there were four motivation responses common to all types of arts participation: the GSS included eight possible motivations and the SPPA included ten, with participants responding to seven or eight motivations, depending on the aligned arts activity.

percent and 79 percent, respectively). Among exhibit-goers, the most commonly reported motivation was a desire to gain knowledge or learn something new (84 percent).

Other commonly reported motivations varied by the type of participation. In particular, about two-thirds of both in-person arts attendees (SPPA) and of performing arts attendees (GSS) reported wanting to see a specific performer. In-person arts attendees (SPPA) also frequently report the motivations “supporting a community organization or event” and “learning or experiencing something new.” Performing arts and exhibit-goers (GSS) also frequently reported, as motivating factors, experiencing high-quality art and wanting to experience a performance at a specific location.

Some motivations ranked consistently lower than others. For all arts activities, with the exception of personally creating artworks, the least cited motivation was to learn about or celebrate one’s cultural heritage (reported only by 16-24 percent of all arts participants). On average, motivation for health reasons was ranked second lowest (13-24 percent of arts participants) followed by participating in the local community (20-22 percent). Low cost was cited by about one-third of participants—a decline from the 40 percent reported in 2012.

Exhibit 4. Among U.S. Adults Who Participated in the Arts, the Percentage Reporting Specific Motivations for Doing So, by Activity Type and Survey Instrument (2017 SPPA, 2016 GSS)

| Motivation | 2017 SPPA | | | | 2016 GSS | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| | In-Person Arts Attendance | Personal Performance of Art | Personal Creation of Artwork | Creative Writing | Performing Arts Attendance | Art Exhibit Attendance |
| Experience High-Quality Art | 45.4 | – | – | – | 64.4 | 71.8 |
| Socialize/Spend Time with Family or Friends | 82.3 | 64.0 | 58.9 | 31.0 | 77.2 | 77.6 |
| Learn About or Celebrate Your or Your Family's Cultural Heritage | 24.1 | 16.9 | 19.3 | 15.6 | 20.5 | 24.1 |
| Support a Community Organization or Event | 64.7 | – | – | – | 49.4 | 57.0 |
| Learn or Experience Something New | 57.8 | 30.2 | 49.5 | 56.0 | 43.9 | 84.1 |
| Wanting to Experience a Performance at, or Record an Experience, at this Particular Location | 39.7 | 11.7 | 37.6 | 35.4 | 58.7 | 72.6 |
| Wanting to See a Specific or Individual Performer or Exhibit | 65.8 | – | – | – | 67.6 | – |
| Wanting to Feel Creative or Creatively Inspired | 37.8 | 37.6 | 61.2 | 78.5 | – | – |
| To Participate in Your Local Community | – | 20.3 | 19.9 | 22.2 | – | – |
| For Health Reasons | – | 19.2 | 12.7 | 24.4 | – | – |
| Low Cost | | | | | 36.5 | 30.3 |

Note: Bolded numbers indicate the highest percentage in the column. Wanting to see a specific or individual performer or exhibit was not among the top motivational factors for which exhibit-goers were asked to respond in the GSS. SPPA and GSS respondents were able to select multiple motivations for participating in arts activities; however, GSS participants who reported attending both performances and exhibits were permitted only to give their motivations for attending one type of arts event (randomly selected to be either a performance or exhibit).

Drivers of Arts Attendance

Analysis of the 2012 and 2016 waves of the GSS Arts and Culture Module shows differences in reported motivations over time. For example, Exhibit 5 shows that a greater percentage of performing arts attendees reported attending in order to experience high-quality art in 2016 (64 percent), compared to 2012 (57 percent).

Exhibit 5. Motivations for Performance Attendance 2012, 2016 (GSS)

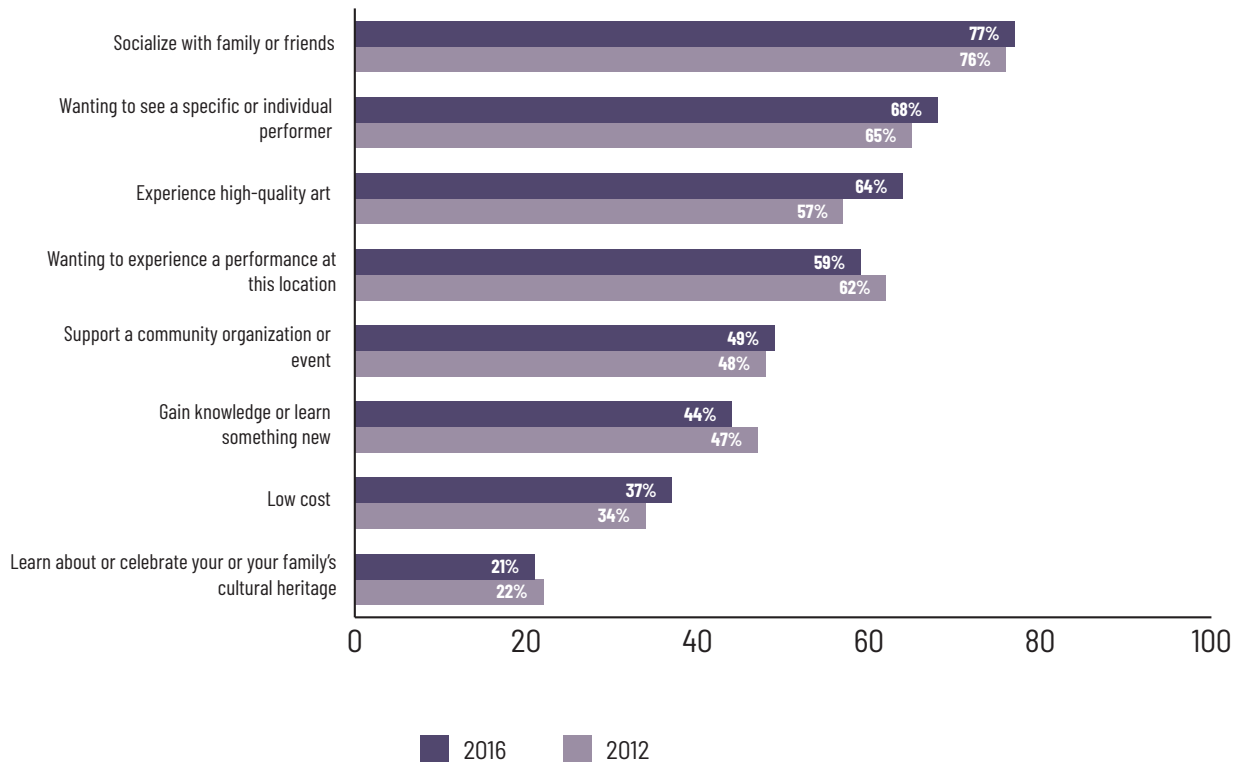
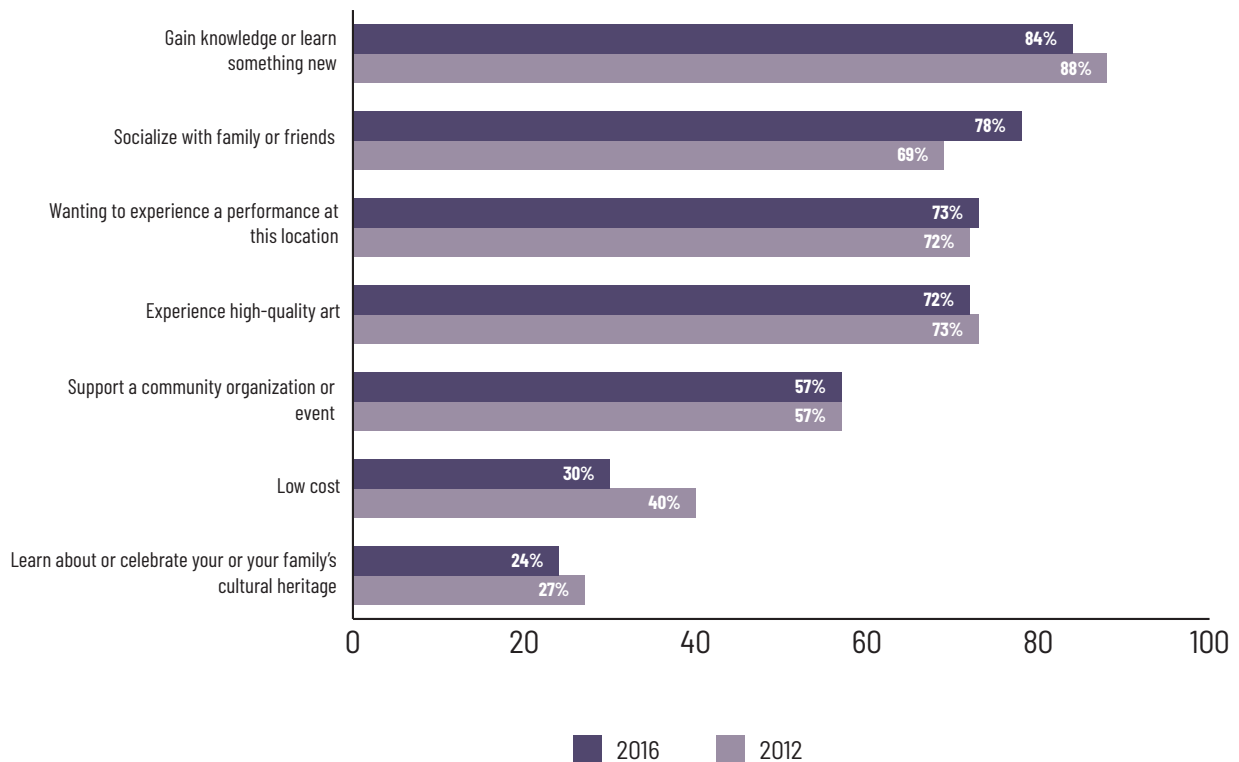


Exhibit 6 shows differences in motivations for exhibit attendees over time. Significantly more exhibit attendees reported attending to socialize with family or friends in 2016 (78 percent) than in 2012 (69 percent). On the other hand, significantly fewer exhibit attendees in 2017 identified low cost as a motivating factor (30 percent) compared to the 2012 group (40 percent).

Exhibit 6. Motivations for Exhibit Attendance 2012, 2016 (GSS)



Personal Performance and Creation of Artworks

Intended Audiences for Personally Performing or Creating Art

Among adults who report performing or creating their own art, the SPPA asks respondents about the intended type of audience for their artwork (see Exhibit 7). With the exception of creative writing, these intended audiences were not broken out by art form.

Between 35 and 40 percent of art creators and performers said their art was intended only for personal consumption. (The percentage was highest for creative writers at nearly 40 percent.) Greater variance was observed among those who reported their intended audience as only people they personally knew: 52 percent of art creators identified this audience type, with only 32 percent of creative writers doing so. The highest percentage of respondents creating or performing for the general public were creative writers (29 percent), followed by arts performers (18 percent), and visual art creators (13 percent).

Nearly half of those who personally created art used the internet to share their work. In contrast, about 41 percent of those who engaged in creative writing used the internet to share their writing, and fewer than 14 percent of those who personally performed art shared their work in this manner.

Exhibit 7. Intended Audience of Respondents Who Personally Created Art (2017 SPPA)

| Intended Audience | Personal Performance | Personal Creation | Creative Writing |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Just you | 37.0% | 34.9% | 39.9% |
| Only people you personally know | 44.6% | 51.7% | 31.5% |
| The general public | 18.4% | 13.4% | 28.6% |
| Used internet to share art | 13.8% | 48.5% | 40.9% |

Venues Where Art is Performed and Created

In the 2017 SPPA, respondents who indicated that they personally performed or created art were asked to identify the location(s) where they did so (see *Exhibit 8*). For creative writing, the question about location was not asked. Over 60 percent of adults who engaged in performing and nearly 78 percent of those who created artworks reported doing so in a private home. Of respondents who personally performed art, over 40 percent performed at a church, synagogue, or other place of worship. Fewer than 25 percent of art creators or performers reported doing these activities in other types of venues.

Exhibit 8. Respondents Indicating the Location That They Performed Art (2017 SPPA)

| Location | Personal Performance | Personal Creation |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|
| Church, Synagogue, or Other Place of Worship | 40.1% | 8.1% |
| Theater, Concert Hall, or Auditorium | 12.2% | — |
| Museum or Gallery | — | 7.6% |
| Restaurant, Bar, Nightclub, or Coffee Shop | 24.3% | 9.4% |
| Park or Open-Air Facility | 15.8% | 24.6% |
| School, Public Library, or Community Center | 13.5% | 18.0% |
| Private Home | 63.1% | 77.8% |
| Some Other Location | 18.0% | 20.9% |

CHAPTER 3: BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Both the GSS and SPPA look at perceived barriers to attendance; however, they do so in different ways. The GSS asks interested non-attendees about specific reasons for not attending the arts. The SPPA asks respondents about the perceived availability of the arts in their community. Together, these surveys reveal both general and specific barriers to arts participation in the U.S.

Key Findings

- The proportion of “**interested non-attendees**” grew significantly from 2012 to 2016.
 - ◇ Over 40 percent of non-attendees said that in the last 12 months they had been interested in attending an arts event, compared with 28 percent in 2012.
- Nearly 40 percent of “interested non-attendees” identified **cost as a barrier** to attendance.
 - ◇ Among adults who said cost and lack of time were barriers to attendance, roughly 72 percent identified these as the most important or only barriers.
- Among adults interested in attending art exhibits or performing arts events but who ultimately chose not to do so, **lack of time** was the most frequently reported barrier.
 - ◇ Cost more frequently came up as a barrier among would-be performing arts attendees than among would-be exhibit-goers.
 - ◇ Among interested performing arts non-attendees, significantly more reported lack of time as a barrier in 2016 (56 percent), compared with those in 2012 (46 percent).

Reasons for Non-Attendance (GSS)

The GSS asked interested non-attendees about six different factors⁷ that may have affected their decision not to attend the most recent performance or exhibit that had interested them⁸. Exhibit 9 presents the percentage of interested non-attendees who reported each barrier to attendance. Roughly half of respondents identified just one barrier. Of the remainder, most identified two barriers. Lack of time was the most frequently reported barrier to attendance (56 percent of all interested non-attendees). More than one-fourth of interested non-attendees reported cost (39 percent) and/or difficulty in getting to the venue (28 percent). Almost a third of respondents identified other reasons for not attending. They include: illness, lack of childcare, and taking care of a family member. Patterns are similar to those in the 2012 data, with lack of time appearing more frequently as a barrier in 2016.

7 These factors included lack of interest in the event, lack of interest in going to the location, difficulty in getting to the event, being unable to find the time to attend, being unable to find another person to attend with, and cost.

8 Interested non-attendees who responded that they had been interested in attending both a performance and an exhibit only provided information on the barriers to attend one of these.

Exhibit 9. Percentage of Interested Non-Attendees and Their Barriers to Attendance (2016 GSS)

| Barriers | Percentage of interested non-attendees who identified this as a barrier | Percentage of interested non-attendees who identified this barrier as their most important or only barrier to attendance |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Lack of time | 55.8 | 71.6 |
| Too difficult to get there | 28.1 | 31.8 |
| Costs too much | 38.5 | 71.6 |
| Couldn't find anyone to go with | 16.7 | 28.0 |
| Did not want to go to that location | 7.3 | 15.1 |
| Program or event was not of interest | 7.6 | 10.2 |

When respondents reported more than one barrier to attendance, they were asked to choose the one that was most important in their decision. Among those who reported time as a barrier to attendance, almost 72 percent identified it as the most important or only barrier to attendance. Cost was also identified as the most important or only barrier to attendance by almost 72 percent of those who had identified cost as a barrier at all. Although the difficulty of getting to the venue was identified as a barrier by almost a third of non-attendees, only a third of this group rated it as most important or the only barrier. Similarly, only 28 percent of those who cited the barrier being unable to find someone to go with selected it as the most important or only barrier to attendance.

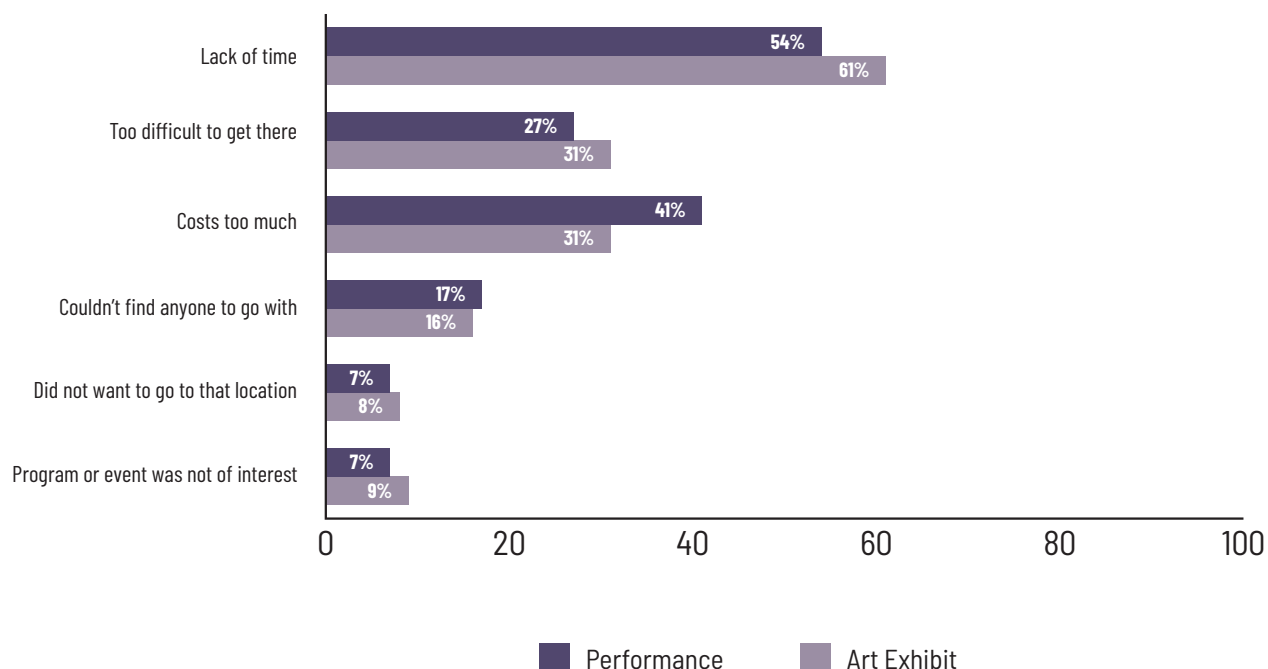
Increases in Interested Non-Attendees

In 2016, just over half of U.S. adults (50.1 percent) had not attended an art performance or exhibit in the previous year. Of these non-attendees, over 40 percent said they had been interested in attending an arts event. This figure represents a sizeable potential audience for arts activities—15 percent of all U.S. adults—if their perceived barriers were addressed. The proportion of non-attendees interested in attending an arts event grew significantly from 2012, when 29 percent of non-attendees (13.5 percent of U.S. adults) had expressed interest in attending an arts event. In 2016, among interested non-attendees of the arts, the large majority (80 percent) chose a performing arts event as having been of interest, versus an art exhibit (31 percent). Eleven percent of interested non-attendees cited both an exhibit and a performing arts event as having been of interest.

Differences in Barriers: Attending Performances and Art Exhibits

As with motivations, the barriers to attendance vary between performing arts events and art exhibits. Exhibit 10 shows the percentage of interested non-attendees who reported each barrier to participation by type, i.e., performances or exhibits. Cost was reported as a barrier to attending performances significantly more often than it was reported by would-be exhibit-goers. Lack of time was reported more often by exhibit-goers; however, the difference was not statistically significant. For the remaining four of the six potential barriers, only small differences were observed in the rate of identification with them (<5 percent).

Exhibit 10. Percentage of Interested Non-Attendees Reporting Each Barrier to Attendance, by Type of Arts Activity (2016 GSS)



To the extent that adults identified any specific barrier as their most important or only barrier, there are differences between would-be performance attendees and would-be exhibit-goers. Lack of time was most frequently reported as the most important or the only barrier to participation by those interested in attending exhibits (77 percent).

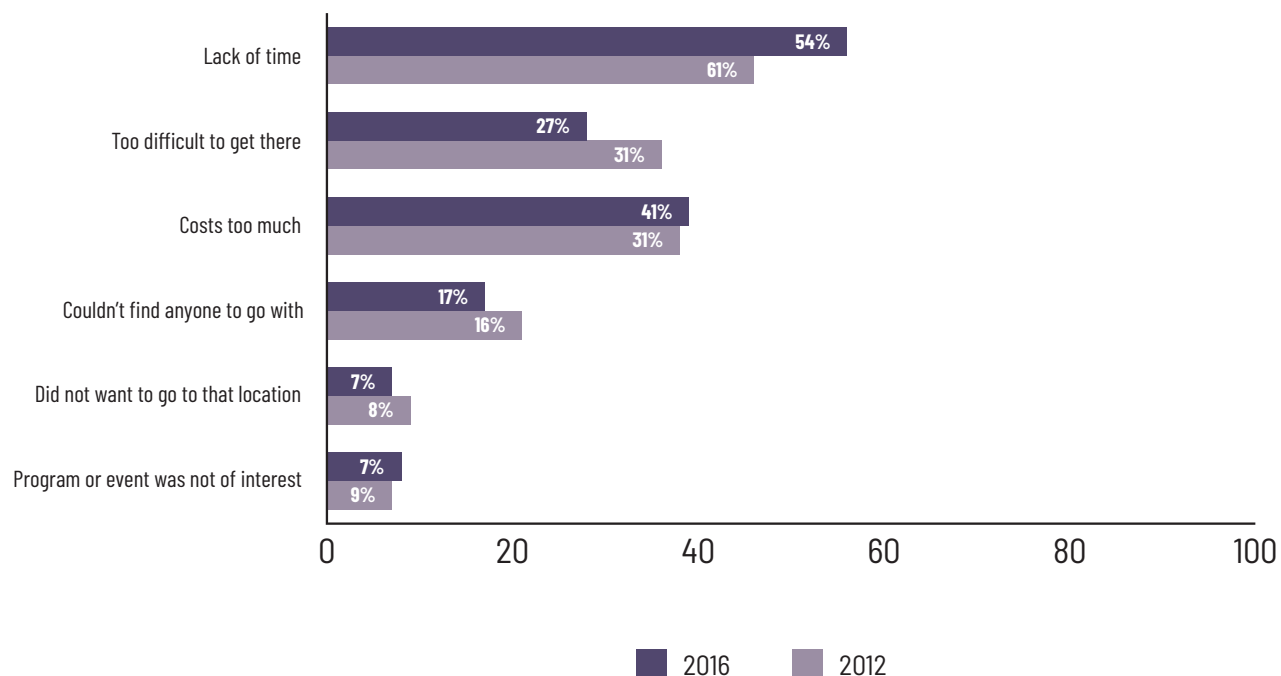
Among those interested in attending performances, cost was cited most frequently as the sole or most important barrier (74 percent) by those who had found cost a barrier.

Among other barriers commonly identified as the most important or only barrier to attendance, difficulty in getting to the venue was cited by 35 percent of those who had been interested in attending a performance, and by 23 percent of those who had been interested in attending an exhibit. The lack of being able to find someone to attend with was more frequently cited as the most important or only barrier by those interested in exhibits (35 percent) than by those interested in performances (26 percent).

Changes in Perceived Barriers Over Time

The 2012 and 2016 GSS Arts and Culture Module questions allow for examination of differences in reported barriers over time (see Exhibit 11). Significantly more respondents who had been interested in attending performances (54 percent) reported lack of time as a barrier in 2016 than in 2012 (42 percent). This finding is consistent with research based on The National Awareness, Attitude & Usage Study of Visitor-Serving Organizations, and suggesting an acceleration of the trend of spending more time at home, beginning in 2011 (Dilenschneider, 2018). Significantly fewer respondents who had been interested in attending exhibits, but who chose not to, reported difficulty getting to a venue in 2016 (31 percent) than in 2012 (44 percent). No other significant differences were observed in the rates of reporting barriers between 2012 and 2016.

Exhibit 11. Among Interested Non-Attendees, the Percentage Reporting Specific Barriers to Attendance at Performances and Exhibits 2012, 2016 (GSS)

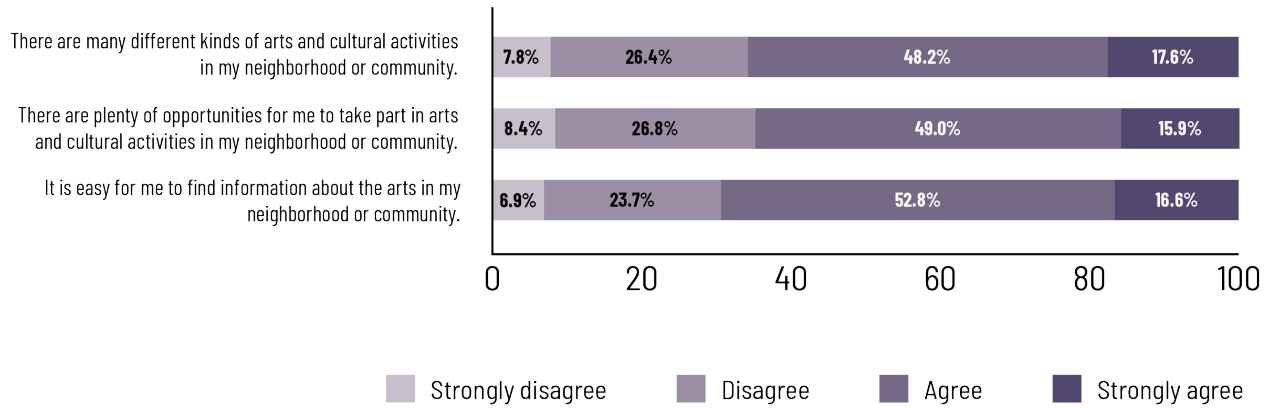


Problems With Arts Availability (SPPA)

The SPPA asks respondents about their general perceptions of arts access in their communities. Just under 66 percent of respondents agreed there are many different kinds of arts and cultural activities available in their neighborhoods or communities (see *Exhibit 12*). Meanwhile, over 69 percent said it was easy for them to find information about the arts in their particular community. In other words, 31 percent of U.S. adults did not agree that the arts are available in their communities and 34 percent did not believe it is easy to find information on local arts activities.

Similarly, about 65 percent of respondents indicated feeling they had the opportunity to take part in the arts and cultural activities available to them, leaving over a third of respondents with the perception that they do not have the opportunity to participate in the arts in their communities. Again, this finding suggests that increasing the availability and accessibility of information about local arts activities may impact perceptions of local opportunities to engage in the arts.

Exhibit 12. Respondent Opinions of Access to the Arts in Their Neighborhood or Communities (2017 SPPA)



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CHAPTER 4: DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

To understand more about the practical implications of motivations and barriers, we examined how decisions about arts participation varied by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Previous Arts Endowment reports, such as the 2019 report *U.S. Patterns of Arts Participation*, have examined the relationships of factors such as of gender, race/ethnicity, and educational achievement in adults' arts participation patterns. Thus, this report instead focuses on age and income differences. Race/ethnicity differences are also explored, but only in the context of adults who reported their family's cultural heritage as a motivation for arts participation.

Key Findings on Motivations

- Among all generational groups⁹ represented in the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, **Generation Z (“Gen Z”)** and **Millennials** were generally among the most likely to take part in arts activities.
 - ◊ The proportion of SPPA respondents who said they participated in the arts decreased with each subsequent generation. (The so-called Silent Generation reported the lowest overall rates of participation.)
 - ◊ Across generational groups, Generation Z reported attending the most in-person arts events, with over 10 percent attending six or more events in the course of a year.
 - ◊ Although more than half of U.S. adults said that socializing was a driver of their arts participation, members of Generation Z—followed by Millennials—were the most likely to report this motivation.
- Those in the **lowest-income quartile** reported low cost as a reason for attendance (39 percent) more often than those in the highest-income quartile (31 percent).
- Still, unlike the case in 2012, income quartile was **not a significant predictor** of whether an individual would identify low cost as a reason for attendance.
- Those in the lowest-income quartile were more likely to identify **celebrating their heritage** and supporting their communities as reasons for arts attendance.
- Across both surveys, at least 30 percent of **people of color**¹⁰—including those identifying as Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Pacific Islander or multiethnic—indicated celebrating their heritage as a reason to participate in the arts.
 - ◊ By comparison, celebrating their culture was identified by only 12-20 percent of white respondents as a reason for arts participation.

| Generation | Age of survey respondent in 2017* |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Silent Generation | 72–89 |
| Baby Boomers | 53–71 |
| Generation X | 37–52 |
| Millennials | 21–36 |
| Generation Z | 18–20 |

*The GSS was conducted in 2016.

⁹ Generational groups are derived from the Pew Research Center (2019). For both the SPPA and GSS, respondents were asked for their age; they were not provided generational cohorts as options to select.

¹⁰ With the exception of personal performance of art where only 24.5% of Asian respondents indicated this motivation.

- Non-citizens and naturalized U.S. citizens were significantly more likely than U.S.-born citizens to report that celebrating their heritage was a reason they participated in the arts.

Key Findings on Barriers

- Nearly 17 percent of all “interested non-attendees” identified **not being able to find someone to go with** as a barrier to attendance, with the highest proportion from Generation Z (44 percent) and the Silent Generation (25 percent) citing this barrier.
- Those in the lowest-income quartile were 2.3 times more likely than those in the highest-income quartile to identify **high cost** and **difficulty getting to a venue** as barriers to attendance.
- A barrier cited more often by those in the highest- than in the lowest-income quartiles was **lack of time**.

Generational Differences in Arts Participation

Exhibit 13 shows generational breakdowns for the 2017 SPPA and 2016 GSS data. While members of Generation Z are included in the analysis, it is important to note that only a small fraction of this generation were eligible to participate in the most recent GSS and SPPA survey administrations. (For example, only two to three years of this generational span had reached the age threshold in time for inclusion in either survey.)

Over half of Generation Z, Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer respondents reported attending in-person arts events, while over one-third in each generational cohort said they had personally performed art or personally created artwork. The Generation Z and Millennial generations reported the highest rates across all forms of arts participation. Arts participation rates decreased with each subsequent generation.

Based on the 2017 SPPA, across all generations, in-person arts attendees on average attended approximately three arts activities in a 12-month period. Generation Z reported attending the most live arts events, with over 10 percent attending six events in the survey year. Generation Z was the only generation with more than half of the survey respondents having attended two or more performing arts activities; 10 percent participated in five or more. Over 50 percent of Generation Z, Millennial, and Generation X respondents created art in two or more media, with nearly 11 percent of Generation Z respondents having created art in six or more media.

In 2016, over 40 percent of all non-attendees were interested in attending an arts event in the future. (Again, this figure was up from 28 percent in 2012.) Of the five generational cohorts, Generation Z was the most interested in attending arts events, with 55 percent of all Generation Z respondents expressing such an interest. At first glance, it may seem that a comparably low proportion of Generation Z are “interested non-attendees” of the arts. However, this factor is due to the higher proportion of Generation Z that actually engage in arts activities. In fact, only 18 percent of Generation Z respondents are non-arts attendees who were not interested in attending an arts event in the last year, compared with 35-37 percent from other generations.

Exhibit 13. Percentage of U.S. Adults Reporting Arts Participation in the Previous Year, by Generational Cohort (2017 SPPA, 2016 GSS)

| Activities | Generation Z | Millennials | Generation X | Baby Boomers | Silent Generation |
|---|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: 2017 | | | | | |
| In-Person Arts Attendance | 64.6 (3.1) | 58.7 (2.9) | 55.0 (3.0) | 53.2 (2.9) | 40.7 (2.7) |
| Personal Performance of Art | 41.8 (2.3) | 46.6 (1.8) | 38.8 (1.7) | 37.9 (1.6) | 35.6 (1.4) |
| Personal Creation of Art | 39.1 (3.0) | 35.8 (2.4) | 31.4 (1.6) | 30.9 (2.0) | 29.9 (1.7) |
| General Social Survey: 2016 | | | | | |
| All Arts Attendees | 75.0 | 49.7 | 47.3 | 51.5 | 47.9 |
| Performance Attendees | 64.3 | 40.4 | 40.7 | 41.7 | 34.6 |
| Art Exhibit Attendees | 53.6 | 34.0 | 29.3 | 35.6 | 28.4 |
| Attendees of Art Exhibits and Performances | 42.9 | 24.5 | 22.9 | 25.8 | 15.3 |

Note: The numbers in parenthesis are the average number of activities participated in. (This statistic was captured only on the 2017 SPPA, and not on the 2016 GSS.) In-person arts attendance refers to responses to the Core 2 questions on the SPPA.

Socializing as a Motivation for Arts Attendance

Exhibit 14 displays the percentage of each generation that reported socializing as a motivating factor in arts participation. Across all generations, upwards of 76 percent of respondents chose socializing as a driver for their arts attendance, and over half cited it as a driver when making art of their own. Across both the SPPA and GSS, members of Generation Z were generally the most likely generation to report attending the arts to socialize, followed closely by Millennials. The difference between Generation Z and Millennials is especially pronounced for exhibit-going. (An exception to this pattern is found in the GSS results. As reported by that survey, Generation X and the Silent Generation have the greatest percentages affirming that socializing was a driver of their performing arts attendance.)

Millennials are also more likely than Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation to identify socialization as a motivating factor for personally performing art. Among those who reported personally creating art, Millennials and Generation X were equally likely to report socialization as a driver (see Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14. Of U.S. Adults Who Participated in the Arts, the Percentage Reporting the Motivation of Socializing With Family or Friends, by Type of Arts Activity and by Generational Cohort (2017 SPPA, 2016 GSS)

| Type of Participation | Generation Z | Millennials | Generation X | Baby Boomers | Silent Generation |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 2017 SPPA | | | | | |
| In-Person Arts Attendance | 86.7 | 86.1 | 81.1 | 80.2 | 76.9 |
| Personal Performance of Art | 67.3 | 70.2 | 64.5 | 60.7 | 52.0 |
| Personal Creation of Visual Art | 63.6 | 61.0 | 61.7 | 55.3 | 52.1 |
| 2016 GSS | | | | | |
| Any Arts Attendance | 81.0 | 79.7 | 77.0 | 76.0 | 76.6 |
| Performing Arts Attendance | 73.3 | 76.6 | 80.8 | 74.8 | 79.5 |
| Art Exhibit Attendance | 100.0* | 83.8 | 72.2 | 77.1 | 73.7 |

Note: Bold numbers indicates highest percentage for each row. The age ranges derive from the Pew Research Center (2019). The Silent Generation includes adults born from 1928 -1945, Baby Boomers 1946-1964, Generation X 1965-1980, Millennials 1981-1996, and Generation Z 1997 or later. *Generation Z respondents composed just 8 percent of the people who responded to the question about attending art exhibits because they wanted to socialize with friends or family. Further, this age group composed 5 percent of the U.S. adult population in 2016.

These findings from the 2016 GSS and 2017 SPPA indicate that, as other research suggests, socializing is an important motivator of arts attendance for most Americans, especially for younger generations. Studies of Millennial culture have found that aspects related to socializing include tight peer bonding, a team-oriented culture, enjoyment in learning as a group, desire for a complete experience (i.e. inclusive of food and drink), unique opportunities, and special venues (Asen, 2015; Korn, 2008).

In Korn’s study of Millennials at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the majority of attendees said they visited museums as a group of friends, noting they would have been uncomfortable if visiting alone. Over the course of several months, Korn observed that one-third of Millennials were visiting with two other people; another third of Millennials went with three or more people. Asen found that Millennials rated as a top barrier—second only to cost—the difficulty in finding someone to accompany them to an arts event, especially for more traditional events such as opera, dance, and classical music. She further commented on Millennials’ interest in “buzz-worthy” events such as those that facilitated online “bragging rights.”

Generational Differences in Barriers to Arts Attendance

On the flip side of socialization as a driver of arts participation, the same factor can become a barrier—especially to arts attendance—when there is an inability to find someone with whom to attend an arts event. This barrier was cited by 17 percent of all “interested non-attendees,” according to the 2016 GSS. Of those who identified unable to find someone to go with as a barrier, 28 percent of all interested non-attendees and 35 percent of those interested in attending an exhibit identified it as the most important or only barrier to their attendance.

The youngest respondents, Generation Z, were more likely to identify this as a barrier—almost 44 percent, compared to 10-25 percent of other generations. Further, of those who identified this barrier, a larger percentage (43 percent) of Generation Z indicated it as their most important or only barrier to participation. Over 30 percent of Baby Boomers and Generation X also reported that being unable to find someone to go with was their most important or only barrier to participation.

Exhibit 15. Percent of Interested Non-Attendees Reporting the Barrier of Being Unable to Find Someone to Go With, by Type of Arts Activity and by Generational Cohort (2016 GSS)

| | Generation Z | Millennials | Generation X | Baby Boomers | Silent Generation |
|--|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Among All Interested Non-Attendees | 43.8 | 19.0 | 9.8 | 16.7 | 25.0 |
| Among Those Interested in Attending Performing Arts Events | 50.0 | 21.8 | 8.9 | 14.8 | 31.3 |
| Among Those Interested in Attending Art Exhibits | 25.0 | 10.3 | 13.2 | 22.0 | 17.9 |

Note: Bold number indicates highest percentage for each row.

When other generational differences are investigated, Millennials demonstrate clear differences from the other age groups. Millennials were more likely than the Silent Generation to identify cost as a barrier to attendance and more likely than Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation to identify lack of time as a barrier. Millennials were less likely than Generation Z, Generation X, and Baby Boomers to identify a program or event not being of interest as a barrier to attendance. Lastly, Millennials were more likely than Generation X and less likely than Generation Z to identify difficulty getting to a location as a barrier to attendance.

The Relationship of Income Differences to Cost as a Deterrent

As is the case with findings from previous Arts Endowment studies, as income level rises, so does arts participation, according to the 2016 GSS data (see Exhibit 16). One-third of survey respondents in the lowest-income group reported attending a performance or exhibit in the prior 12 months, compared with three-fourths in the highest-income group. This pattern persists whether considering attendance at performances or art exhibits.

Exhibit 16. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Arts, by Activity Type and Income Quartile (2016 GSS)

| Attendance Categories | Lowest 25% | 2nd Quartile | 3rd Quartile | Highest 25% |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| All Arts Attendees | 31.5 | 44.6 | 60.2 | 74.8 |
| Performing Arts Attendees | 21.8 | 35.6 | 49.9 | 65.8 |
| Art Exhibit Attendees | 22.4 | 29.8 | 36.2 | 53.2 |

Note: Bold number indicates highest percentage for each row.

The percentage of each income group reporting that low cost motivated their attendance ranged from 30 to 39 percent, with those in the lowest-income quartile citing it the most often as a factor, and those in highest-income quartile citing it the least often. However, unlike in 2012, income quartile was not a significant predictor of whether an individual would identify low cost as a reason for attendance. Of those who identified low cost as a reason for attendance, between 68 and 71 percent of each income quartile group indicated the factor as the most important or only reason for their attendance.

As in 2012, respondents in 2016 were asked whether the most recent event they had attended was free. Those in the highest-income quartile were significantly less likely than those in all other income quartiles) to report having attending a free exhibit. Still, there are no significant differences in the likelihood of the three lowest-income groups to attend free exhibits. Further, there are no significant differences between any income quartile groups in their likelihood to attend a free performance.

Income quartile significantly predicted the likelihood to identify the location of the arts event as a reason for their attendance. Respondents in the lower-income quartiles were significantly more likely than the other groups to report this motivation. Arts participants in the lowest-income quartile and those in the third quartile were also significantly more likely to identify supporting a community organization or event as a reason for attendance. Finally, in higher-income quartiles, the likelihood of reporting celebrating one’s cultural heritage as a reason for attendance decreased, with those in the lowest-income quartile more likely to attend to celebrate their heritage than those in the highest-income quartile.

Exhibit 17 shows barriers to attendance by income quartile. Given that members of the lowest-income quartile have the lowest arts attendance rates overall, it is not surprising that this group also contains the highest percentage of uninterested non-attendees (46 percent). However, when considering those who wanted to attend an arts activity within the past year but who did not, the results are similar across income quartiles, with rates ranging from 39-45 percent. Below are barriers reported by each income quartile.

Exhibit 17. Among Interested Non-Attendees, the Percent of Adults within Each Income Quartile Who Reported the Following Barriers to Arts Attendance (2016 GSS)

| | Lowest 25% | 2nd Quartile | 3rd Quartile | Highest 25% |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Costs too much | 50.0 | 41.7 | 29.3 | 30.8 |
| Lack of time | 45.1 | 57.2 | 62.0 | 62.0 |
| Did not want to go to that location | 5.6 | 5.8 | 8.0 | 5.0 |
| Too difficult to get there | 42.1 | 20.1 | 26.0 | 23.3 |
| Couldn’t find anyone to go with | 27.1 | 13.7 | 14.7 | 9.2 |
| Program or event was not of interest | 6.9 | 8.6 | 6.6 | 5.8 |

Note: Bold number indicates highest percentage for each row.

For Which Groups is Celebrating Cultural Heritage a Motivating Factor?

Many arts events and exhibits feature material of cultural significance, making it somewhat surprising that learning about or celebrating one’s cultural heritage is among the least frequently reported as a reason for attendance (17-24 percent of arts attendees). As previously discussed, those in the highest-income quartile were less likely than those in all other groups to identify celebrating their heritage as a reason for attendance. Here we will explore other demographic variables related to this factor as a reason for attendance.

Exhibit 18 shows the percentage of each group that identified celebrating heritage as a reason for different types of arts participation, based on the 2017 SPPA data. Across all types of arts participation, at least 30 percent of people of color¹¹, including those identifying as Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander and multiethnic, reported celebrating their heritage as a reason they participate in the arts. By contrast, fewer than 20 percent of those identifying as

¹¹ With the exception of personal performance of art where only 24.5% of Asian respondents indicated this motivation.

white cited celebrating their heritage as a reason they participate. For attending in-person arts events, 62 percent of Pacific Islanders identified this motivation.

According to the SPPA, citizenship was significantly related to the rate of identifying celebrating heritage as a reason for arts participation, with non-citizens more likely than U.S. citizens to report this motivation for various types of arts activities. Additionally, naturalized U.S. citizens were more likely than U.S.-born citizens to identify celebrating heritage as a reason for participating in the arts.

The 2016 GSS data show similar patterns associated with race/ethnicity and citizenship. Exhibit 18 shows GSS breakouts for learning about or celebrating cultural heritage as a motivating factor. People of color, including almost 47 percent of Hispanics, 34 percent of Blacks, and 35 percent of other races, reported that learning about or celebrating their heritage was a reason for attending the arts. By contrast, only 19 percent of those identifying as white cited learning about their cultural heritage as a reason.

Citizenship status also impacted the frequency with which respondents reported celebrating their heritage as a reason for attendance. Non-U.S. citizens were more likely than U.S. citizens to attend the arts to celebrate their cultural heritage. Finally, GSS results indicate that the number of grandparents a respondent has that were born outside of the U.S. was related to motivations for participating in the arts. Respondents whose four grandparents were born outside the U.S. were more likely than other respondents to attend the arts to celebrate their heritage.

Exhibit 18. Of U.S. Adults Who Participate in the Arts, the Percent Reporting the Motivation of Celebrating Their Cultural Heritage, by Type of Arts Activity and by Race/Ethnicity and Citizenship (2017 SPPA)

| | In-person Arts Attendance | Personal Performance of Art | Personal Creation of Visual Art |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Overall Percentage Identifying this Motivating Factor | 24.1 | 16.9 | 19.3 |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | |
| White | 19.8 | 12.4 | 15.6 |
| Black | 46.3 | 34.9 | 35.1 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 42.8 | 42.3 | 31.8 |
| Asian | 45.2 | 24.5 | 37.7 |
| Pacific Islander | 62.0 | 42.1 | 39.4 |
| Multi-Ethnic | 32.7 | 35.0 | 39.4 |
| Hispanic | 43.3 | 31.6 | 26.2 |
| Non-Hispanic | 21.5 | 14.3 | 18.3 |
| Citizenship | | | |
| U.S. Citizen | 22.5 | 15.9 | 18.0 |
| Not a U.S. Citizen | 54.8 | 33.3 | 42.8 |
| U.S. Citizen Born in U.S. Territory | 28.4 | 28.8 | 36.6 |
| Naturalized U.S. Citizen | 49.4 | 34.4 | 32.2 |

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This report updates findings from *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* (2015), a National Endowment for the Arts report that analyzed data from the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS). At the time of that report, declining arts attendance in arts activities over the previous two decades had heightened the importance of understanding more about demographic, behavioral, and other contextual factors concerning participation.

Data from the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) have shown that arts participation is on the rise. While the 2016 GSS findings do not corroborate this upward trend, they do show an increase in the percent of those *interested* in attending the arts—even if the respondent ultimately chose not to attend.

Understanding what factors drive or hinder arts participation can promote a thriving U.S. arts sector. Data from the SPPA and GSS provide insights into what motivates Americans to participate in the arts—whether attending arts events or creating art of their own. In addition, the SPPA collects data on the perception of local arts availability, and the GSS gathers data on the barriers that prevented interested attendees from ultimately participating. Taken as a whole, these findings prompt consideration of ways that the survey results can be leveraged to increase participation in the arts and to engage interested non-attendees.

The most commonly cited motivations across the SPPA and GSS included socializing, and feeling creative or creatively inspired. The most commonly reported barriers to arts attendance, or those deemed most important, were lack of time and high cost. These findings are largely consistent with those reported in prior reports on motivations and barriers to attendance.

Consistent with prior results, socializing was an important motivator for in-person arts attendance (SPPA), performance attendance (GSS), and personal performance of art (SPPA), with the majority of respondents across all participation categories, with the exception of creative writing, reporting this motivation. Similar percentages of performing arts attendees and exhibit-goers (GSS) reported socializing as a main motivation; however, learning something new was more frequently reported as a motivation by exhibit-goers. Although the lack of someone to go with was not a frequently cited barrier to arts attendance, nearly 30 percent of those who cited it at all said it was the only barrier, or the most important one.

Further investigation reveals generational differences in the reporting of socialization as a reason—or, conversely, of its lack as a barrier—with younger generations generally more concerned with participating in the arts as a way to socialize. When examined as a barrier to attendance, being unable to find someone to go with was most commonly cited by Generation Z.

While low cost was not a frequently cited reason for attendance, it was the second-most frequently cited, with significantly more of those interested in attending a performing arts event identifying this barrier than those interested in attending an art exhibit.

Nearly 72 percent of adults who identified cost as a barrier indicated that it was the most important or only barrier to attendance. While a higher percentage of those in the lowest-income quartile identified cost as a reason for attendance, they were not significantly more likely to identify this motivation than those in other income quartiles. Still, those in the lowest-income quartiles were more likely than others to identify cost as a barrier to attendance. Related to cost, difficulty getting to a location was also more commonly cited as a barrier to attendance by those in the lowest-income quartile.

Across all types of arts participation, celebrating your heritage was the least or second-least reported motivation for attendance. However, for some groups this reason for attendance was more salient. Racial/ethnic minority groups were significantly more likely than white respondents to identify celebrating their culture as a reason for attendance. In addition, non-U.S. citizens, compared with U.S. citizens, and naturalized versus U.S.-born citizens, were more likely to identify celebrating their heritage as a reason for their participation in the arts.

A number of differences were observed between performance-goers, and exhibit-goers with the latter group more likely to report the following motivations: experience high-quality art, experience a location, learn something new, and support their community.

Between the 2012 and 2016 waves of the GSS, there was an increase in the percentage of adults who attended performing arts events in order to experience high-quality art, and an increase in the percentage of art exhibit-goers motivated by socializing with family or friends. A decrease in the percentage of exhibit attendees citing low cost as a motivating factor was also observed. Finally, an increase in the prevalence of adults citing lack of time as a barrier to attendance was observed between 2012 and 2016.

Implications for Arts Organizations

Findings from this report show that arts organizations—along with policymakers and tourism offices—face a range of barriers that they must help audiences overcome. At the same time, some key motivations stand out—both for specific audience segments and for audiences as a whole.

Arts Participation and Socializing

For arts organizations, data from the SPPA and GSS reinforce that socializing with family and friends is of importance across all age groups, for audiences of performing arts and exhibits, and for personally performing or creating art. Thus, arts organizations might consider launching or expanding initiatives that help shape the arts experience as a social event. Examples already in practice in the field include pre- and post-performance audience engagement activities; ticketing discounts for groups; and customized tours for families or groups with special interests. Some organizations host events around a particular topic (such as a discussion about flower gardens at a Monet exhibit) or audience group (such as young professionals or retirees) as an opportunity for their audiences to meet new people while having a cultural experience. Even reconsidering venue design from a social perspective can encourage audiences who are motivated by socializing. Along these lines, organizations have experimented with strategies such as adding informal group seating areas or reimagining the placement of docents in the exhibit space to encourage interaction.

For marketing departments, awareness of the social aspect of arts participation can help organizations develop more effective and targeted campaigns. By showcasing images of families and groups interacting at their programs, an organization emphasizes the arts as a fun, meaningful way to spend time with family and friends. In a similar vein, creating materials and messaging about enjoying the arts on one's own could help make potential solo attendees more comfortable with the idea of attending.

Audience Segmentation

The demographic data collected in the SPPA and GSS offer important insights for marketing professionals, who share the challenge of conveying differentiated messages to appeal to varied audience segments. Of particular interest for this report are the recent findings related to age, race/ethnicity, and income.

For example, one challenge of developing marketing materials is the need to appeal to different age groups (especially those in the Generation Z and Millennial generations, given their numbers and demonstrated interest in attending arts events). One strategy is to focus on how the “investment” of time will offer socializing, provide special opportunities (e.g., meeting a performer), and give the chance to learn something new—a factor especially important for exhibit-goers.

Presenting performing arts or exhibits with themes related to the heritage of different racial/ethnic groups has the potential to attract audiences from these diverse groups—particularly those who are already arts attendees.

Conveying clear information about free and lower-cost events is critical for organizations seeking to attract those in lowest-income quartiles. These participants may be as concerned about ease of getting to the event and the associated

transportation and parking costs as about the cost of the event itself. Arts organizations interested in attracting audiences in the lowest-income quartiles might consider messaging that emphasizes transportation concerns alongside the lower cost of tickets or admission.

Creating Opportunities for Learning

In planning programs, museum and gallery professionals can be mindful of the high value that exhibit-goers place on learning or experiencing something new. Many organizations already develop exhibits with opportunities for learning central to their design—whether through exhibit labels, printed exhibit guides, interactions with staff, technology-focused exhibits, or interactive arts activities. In addition, many of the same activities that encourage socializing, such as lectures and tours, also provide appealing learning opportunities. Giving these opportunities a prominent place in marketing materials may help appeal to both new and existing attendees. Moreover, because of the importance of socializing to attendees, it may be beneficial to portray learning for a wide range of audiences.

Lack of Time

Finally, one reason that socializing may be of increasing importance is the competition for leisure time. Audiences may be able to accomplish multiple personal goals by attending arts events and exhibits with their friends and family. It is worth keeping in mind that, for audiences pressed for time, clear and accessible advance information helps with decision-making and supports a positive arts experience. Such information includes when an event may be, how long a performance will be, how much time to expect to spend at an exhibit, directions to the venue, the availability of parking, options for food and drink at and near the venue, and so forth. Experimenting with performance timing or exhibit hours could open programming to new audiences.

Data on barriers and motivations can support the field in the difficult decision of how to spend limited marketing and programming dollars most effectively. Still, it's worth noting that arts organizations are clearly doing some things right. The survey findings continue to show that a general lack of interest in the program or event is rarely a serious barrier to attendance.

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APPENDIX

Exhibit A1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Participated in Specific Arts Activities (SPPA): 2017

| Attendance: In the last 12 months did you go to... | | Personal Performance of Art: During the last 12 months, did you... | | Personal Creation of Art: During the last 12 months did you... | |
|---|-------------|--|-------------|--|-------------|
| a live music performance? This could include professional, community, or student musicians. | 42.0 | do any singing? This could include activities such as singing for an audience or in a choir, learning to sing, or singing in your home or at a place of worship. | 25.3 | take any photographs as an artistic activity? | 13.8 |
| a fair or festival that featured crafts, visual arts, or performing artists such as musicians, singers, dancers, or actors. | 40.3 | do any dancing? This could include practicing or performing dance, doing dance as exercise, or dancing at a wedding or party, or in a club. | 23.6 | do any painting, drawing, sculpture, or printmaking activities? | 13.4 |
| a live play or musical? This could include professional, community, or student performers. | 23.8 | play a musical instrument? This could include playing for an audience, learning to play, or playing for your own enjoyment. | 10.9 | do any weaving, crocheting, quilting, needlework, knitting, or sewing? | 11.7 |
| an art exhibit, such as paintings, sculpture, pottery, photography, or digital art. | 22.7 | create or perform music in ways other than singing or playing an instrument? This could include composing songs, performing rap, or editing or remixing music.* | 3.3 | edit any photographs as an artistic activity? | 9.9 |
| a live dance performance? This could include professional, community, or student performers. | 15.3 | get involved in the production of any theatrical performances? This could include activities such as making costumes, building sets, lighting, or directing.* | 2.4 | do any scrapbooking, origami, or other paper-based art? | 6.7 |
| any other kind of live performance? This could include storytelling, standup or improv comedy, puppetry, or a circus performance. | 10.6 | do any acting? This could include acting in a play or musical, or doing standup or improv comedy, or puppetry. | 2.3 | do any leatherwork, metalwork, or woodwork? | 6.6 |
| an event featuring a poet or writer? This could include book signings, readings, or poetry slams. | 6.0 | use a computer, laptop, tablet, cell phone, or other mobile device to edit or remix music?* | 2.1 | do any creative writing? This could include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or plays.** | 6.5 |
| | | | | create any films or videos as an artistic activity? | 5.2 |
| | | | | make any pottery, ceramics, or jewelry? | 4.1 |
| | | | | design or create any animations, digital art, computer graphics, or video games? | 3.0 |

Note: Bold numbers indicate highest percentage for each column. Attendance figures are from the 2017 SPPA's Core 2. *Motivations are not collected for these items. **Respondents report motivations for creative writing separate from other arts creation activities.

Exhibit A2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Reporting Arts Participation and Number of Different Kinds of Activities Participated in by Generation (2017 SPPA, 2016 GSS)

| Activities | Generation Z | Millennials | Generation X | Baby Boomers | Silent Generation |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SPPA 2017 | | | | | |
| In-Person Arts Attendance | 64.6 (3.1) | 58.7 (2.9) | 55.0 (3.0) | 53.2 (2.9) | 40.7 (2.7) |
| Fair or Festival | 46.3 | 44.7 | 41.2 | 39.5 | 27.1 |
| Art Exhibit | 28.7 | 22.9 | 23.5 | 23.6 | 15.7 |
| Live Music Performance | 57.0 | 46.0 | 44.0 | 39.2 | 27.9 |
| Play or Musical | 27.8 | 23.6 | 23.8 | 24.8 | 20.2 |
| Dance | 19.7 | 16.7 | 17.3 | 13.5 | 9.8 |
| Event Featuring a Poet/Writer | 7.4 | 6.8 | 5.2 | 6.1 | 5.5 |
| Any Other Kind of Live Performance | 16.3 | 12.5 | 11.1 | 9.3 | 5.5 |
| Personal Participation in Performing Arts | 41.8 (2.3) | 46.6 (1.8) | 38.8 (1.7) | 37.9 (1.6) | 35.6 (1.4) |
| Singing | 21.9 | 26.7 | 24.7 | 24.6 | 27.1 |
| Playing Musical Instrument | 17.8 | 12.7 | 10.4 | 9.9 | 7.6 |
| Dancing | 30.4 | 31.4 | 22.5 | 20.6 | 13.1 |
| Acting | 7.8 | 3.1 | 2.2 | 1.4 | 0.9 |
| Personal Creation of Art | 39.1 (3.0) | 35.8 (2.4) | 31.4 (1.6) | 30.9 (2.0) | 29.9 (1.7) |
| Painting | 19.5 | 17.9 | 13.9 | 9.7 | 7.7 |
| Taking Photographs | 24.2 | 16.1 | 14.2 | 11.5 | 8.2 |
| Editing Photographs | 18.3 | 11.8 | 10.5 | 8.0 | 5.2 |
| Filmmaking | 13.6 | 6.5 | 6.2 | 2.9 | 1.3 |
| Animation | 7.2 | 4.4 | 2.8 | 1.8 | 0.9 |
| Pottery | 7.3 | 4.4 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 1.9 |
| Leather Working | 5.6 | 6.9 | 6.6 | 6.9 | 5.4 |
| Weaving | 9.8 | 10.1 | 10.2 | 13.1 | 16.6 |
| Scrapbooking | 11.6 | 9.6 | 6.1 | 4.5 | 4.6 |
| Creative Writing | 11.0 | 9.5 | 5.7 | 4.9 | 3.5 |
| GSS 2016 | | | | | |
| All Arts Attendees | 75.0 | 49.7 | 47.3 | 51.5 | 47.9 |
| Performing Arts Attendees | 64.3 | 40.4 | 40.7 | 41.7 | 34.6 |
| Art Exhibit Attendees | 53.6 | 34.0 | 29.3 | 35.6 | 28.4 |
| Performing Arts and Exhibit Attendees | 42.9 | 24.5 | 22.9 | 25.8 | 15.3 |

Note: The numbers in parenthesis are the average number of activities respondents participated in.



