



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

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Research Division
Note #70
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1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: Half of U.S. Adults Attended Arts Performances or Exhibitions

According to the 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), half of the U.S. adult population, or 97 million different people, attended at least one of seven arts activities—jazz, classical music, opera, musical plays, plays, ballet, or art museums. Visiting art museums was the most popular activity, with 34.9 percent of adults reporting visiting at least once, followed by attending musical plays (24.5 percent), non-musical plays (15.8 percent), classical music concerts (15.6 percent), jazz (11.9 percent), ballet (5.8 percent), and opera (4.7 percent). Table 1 provides estimates of the number of adults who attended each of these activities and the number of times they attended in the last 12 months. The product of the number of attendees and their frequency gives the total number of attendances/visits in the last column.

The 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) is the fourth nationwide SPPA sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. The 1997 SPPA consisted of 12,349 telephone interviews conducted from June to October 1997 by Westat Corporation of Rockville, Maryland. While the 1997 SPPA was conducted as an independent survey, the three prior SPPA surveys (in 1982, 1985, and 1992) were conducted as supplements to the Census Bureau's National Crime Victimization Survey. The shift to an independent survey allows greater flexibility in questionnaire and sample design as well as more timely reporting and lower cost, but the change also complicates comparisons of the 1997 results with the results of earlier surveys.* Consequently, overall levels or rates of participation from the 1997 SPPA can not be compared directly to the 1992 SPPA estimates. The distribution of the arts audience, however, can be compared. Table 2 shows the number and distribution of total attendances (or visits) to performing arts activities and art museums in 1992 and 1997. The distributions indicate that classical music, opera, musical play, and art museum audiences grew at a greater rate from 1992 to 1997 than jazz, non-musical play, and ballet audiences.

* A further discussion of comparing results of the 1997 SPPA with the prior surveys can be found in the Technical Appendix to this note and in Research Division Report #39, *1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, Summary Report.

Participation Via Broadcast and Recorded Media

Another significant area of arts participation covered in the 1997 SPPA is arts participation via broadcast and recorded media. The 1997 SPPA, as did prior SPPAs, indicates substantially higher participation rates for broadcast and recorded media than for live attendance. The rates of participation via these media for jazz, classical music, and opera were more than twice the rates for live events. Table 3 shows the percentages of adult Americans who participated in the seven arts activities through the broadcast and recorded media in 1997. The table also shows the total number of people who used each medium at least once for an art activity. Viewing presentations about the visual arts such as programs on museum exhibitions on television or video was the most popular activity among American adults, with 45% reporting they had watched visual arts programs during the previous 12 months. Although dance and visual art were seen primarily via television, the other art forms attracted large numbers of listeners on radio and recordings. Classical music and jazz had the largest audiences for radio and recordings (records, cassettes, CDs). The classical music audience for radio was 80 million adults and 67 million for recordings. For jazz, the audience was 76 and 57 million, respectively. Broadcasts and recorded media reached people who do not live near arts centers, who are not mobile or who have disabilities, who cannot afford tickets, and who have child care or other responsibilities that prevent them from going out very often. Almost 75 percent of the respondents over the age of 74 participated in the arts via these media.

Participation by Performing or Creating Art

The 1997 SPPA asked questions about each respondent's participation in the arts by doing, that is, by personally performing or creating art. Those who replied that they participated by doing also were asked whether they performed in public or had their work displayed or published. The highest rates of personal participation in 1997 were in photography (16.6 percent), painting/drawing/sculpting (15.9 percent), dance other than ballet (12.6 percent), creative writing (12.1 percent), and classical music (11.0 percent). The lowest rates were in jazz and opera (2.2 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively) and in ballet (less than 1 percent). Table 4 shows the rates and number of participants who personally performed or created art and the rates and number of participants who did so in public. Data for public performance demonstrate the popularity of singing in groups. In 1997, more than 10 percent of the adult population—over 20 million people—sang publicly in a choir, chorus, or other ensemble.

Additional Information from the 1997 SPPA

The 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts collected a substantial body of information from respondents that allows for analysis of the characteristics of arts participants and non-participants and the factors that may influence their decision to participate. In addition to obtaining demographic information from respondents, other questions focused on the exposure to the arts they received as children, whether they took lessons or classes in the arts, and the extent to which they are exposing their children to the arts. The 1997 SPPA also asked about barriers to participation such as inaccessibility to arts facilities, lack of time, lack of a companion, and poor

health. Several new questions were asked in the 1997 SPPA about the use of home computers in learning about live arts events or to create works of art.

Research Division Report #39, 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: Summary Report, will provide an overview of the results from these survey questions. Future Research Division Notes will provide excerpts from the report on the findings with regard to demographic and geographic differences in arts participation. More detailed analyses of arts participation patterns identified in the 1997 SPPA (and compared to prior SPPAs) will examine topics such as arts participation and age, educational level, and musical preferences as well as detailed trends in audiences for individual art forms such as classical music, literature, and visual arts. These more in-depth analyses will be available in 1999. For up-to-date information on the availability of Research Division Notes and Reports, contact the National Endowment for the Arts World Wide Web site at <http://arts.endow.gov>.

Research Division Reports and Notes of Related Interest

Notes:

- Note # 8 Studies of the Arts Public: A Status Report (March 23, 1984)
- Note # 12 Audience Crossover: Media Participation and Attending Live Events (June 5, 1985)
- Note # 14 Age, Desire, and Barriers to Increase Attendance at Performing Arts Events and Art Museums (February 4, 1986)
- Note # 16 Public Participation in the Arts by Urban and Rural Residence (May 27, 1986)
- Note # 18 Population Location and the Barriers of 'Art Form Not Available' and 'Too Far To Go' (September 11, 1986)
- Note # 27 Public Participation in the Arts: 1982 and 1985 Compared (December 9, 1987)
- Note # 50 Public Participation in the Arts: 1982 and 1992 (October 25, 1993)
- Note # 51 Demographic Differences in Arts Attendance: 1982-1992 (February 16, 1994)
- Note # 52 Demographic Differences in Arts Participation Via Broadcast and Recorded Media: 1982-1992 (February 16, 1994)
- Note # 55 Public Participation in the Arts in Regional and Metropolitan Areas, 1982-1992 (June 1, 1995)

Reports:

- Report # 21 Socialization and Participation in the Arts
- Report # 22 Who Reads Literature: The Future of the United States As a Nation of Readers
- Report # 23 The Audience for American Art Museums
- Report # 24 Expanding the Audience for the Performing Arts
- Report # 25 Race, Ethnicity, and Arts Participation
- Report # 26 Summary Report: 12 Local Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts
- Report # 27 Arts Participation in America: 1982-1992
- Report # 30 A Practical Guide to Arts Participation Research
- Report # 31 Jazz in America: Who's Listening
- Report # 32 American Participation in Opera and Musical Theater 1992
- Report # 33 Turning On and Tuning In: Public Participation in the Arts Via Media in the United States
- Report # 34 Age and Arts Participation with a Focus on the Baby Boom Cohort
- Report # 35 American Participation in Theater
- Report # 36 Effects of Arts Education on Participation in the Arts
- Report # 39 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: Summary Report (Available Nov. 1998)

Further information on these Research Notes and Reports can be found on the National Endowment for the Arts World Wide Web site:

Notes-- <http://arts.endow.gov/pub/ResearchNotes.html>

Reports-- <http://arts.endow.gov/pub/ResearchReports.html>

Table 1. Attendance at Arts Events: 1997

Arts Activity	Persons		Attendances/Visits	
	% of Adults Attending at Least Once in Last 12 Months	Number of Adults Attending (millions) ¹	Average Number of Attendances/Visits Per Attendee	Total Number of Attendances/Visits (millions)
Attended:				
Jazz Performance	11.9%	23.3	3.1	72.2
Classical Music	15.6%	30.5	2.9	88.5
Opera	4.7%	9.2	1.8	16.5
Musical Play	24.5%	47.9	2.2	105.4
Non-Musical Play	15.8%	30.9	2.5	77.3
Ballet	5.8%	11.3	1.7	19.3
Other Dance ²	12.4%	24.3	2.6	63.1
Visited:				
Art Museum	34.9%	68.3	3.3	225.3
Historic Park	46.9%	91.7	4.1	376.1
Art/Craft Fair	47.5%	92.9	2.6	241.6
Read:				
Literature ³	63.0%	123.2	NA ⁴	NA

¹ The number of attenders was computed by multiplying the attendance rate by 195.6 million--the U.S. resident non-institutionalized population, 18 years of age and over in 1997 (from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Study, March 1997).

² "Other Dance" refers to dance other than ballet including, for example, modern, folk, and tap.

³ "Literature" refers to reading plays, poetry, novels or short stories.

⁴ No frequency information was obtained for reading literature.

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Table 2. Number and Distribution of Attendances at Arts Events: 1992 and 1997

Arts Activity	1992		1997	
	Total Attendances Over 12 Months (millions) ¹	Percent Distribution	Total Attendances Over 12 Months (millions) ¹	Percent Distribution
Jazz Performance	57.1	12.9%	72.2	11.9%
Classical Music	60.3	13.7%	88.5	14.6%
Opera	10.4	2.4%	16.5	2.7%
Musical Play	74.5	16.9%	105.4	17.4%
Non-Musical Play	60.5	13.7%	77.3	12.8%
Ballet	14.8	3.4%	19.3	3.2%
Art Museums	163.7	37.1%	225.3	37.3%
Totals	441.0	100.0%	604.5	100.0%

¹ The number of attendances was computed by multiplying the number of attenders by the average number of times attended.

Source: *1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*

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Table 3. Participation Rates and Total Participation Via Broadcast and Recorded Media: 1997

Activity Watched or Listened to	Media	Percentage of Adult Population Using at Least Once in Last 12 Months	Number of Adults Using at Least Once in Last 12 Months (millions) ¹
		1997	1997
Jazz	Video (TV/VCR)	31%	60.6
	Radio	39%	76.3
	Recorded ²	29%	56.7
Classical Music	Video (TV/VCR)	32%	62.6
	Radio	41%	80.2
	Recorded ²	34%	66.5
Opera	Video (TV/VCR)	15%	29.3
	Radio	11%	21.5
	Recorded ²	11%	21.5
Musical Play	Video (TV/VCR)	25%	48.9
	Radio	5%	9.8
	Recorded ²	12%	23.5
Non-Musical Play	Video (TV/VCR)	23%	45.0
	Radio	6%	11.7
Dance	Video (TV/VCR)	39%	76.3
Visual Art ³	Video (TV/VCR)	45%	88.0

¹ The number of media users was computed by multiplying the usage rate by 195.6 million--the U.S. resident non-institutionalized population, 18 years of age and over (from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 1997).

² Includes phonographs, cassette tapes, and compact discs.

³ Refers to programs about artists, art works, or art museums.

Source: 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

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Table 4. Participation in the Arts via Personal Performance and Creation: 1997

Arts Activity	Private and/or Public Performance/Display		Public Performance, Display, or Publication	
	% of Adults Doing at Least Once in Last 12 Months	Number of Adults Doing (millions) ¹	% of Adults Doing at Least Once in Last 12 Months	Number of Adults Doing (millions) ¹
Playing: Jazz	2.2%	4.3	0.9%	1.8
Classical Music	11.0%	21.5	1.3%	2.5
Singing: Opera	1.8%	3.5	0.3%	0.6
Musicals	7.7%	15.1	1.7%	3.3
Choirs, Chorale	NA ²	NA ²	10.4%	20.3
Dancing: Ballet	0.5%	1.0	0.3%	0.6
Other Dance	12.6%	24.6	2.0%	3.9
Acting in Plays	NA ²	NA ²	2.7%	5.3
Painting/Drawing/Sculpting	15.9%	31.1	2.9%	5.7
Photography	16.6%	32.6	2.3%	4.4
Creative Writing	12.1%	23.7	1.2%	2.3

¹ The number of personal participants was computed by multiplying the participation rate by 195.6 million--the U.S. resident non-institutionalized population, 18 years of age and over (from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 1997).

²For these activities, questions were only asked about public performances.

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Source: 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts