

---

1997  
Survey of Public Participa-  
tion  
in the Arts

---

SUMMARY REPORT



National Endowment for the Arts

Research Division Report Number 39  
December 1998



National Endowment for the Arts  
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, DC 20506-0001

Telephone: 202-682-5400

Produced by Tom Bradshaw  
Research Division, National Endowment For The Arts

Prepared for the Research Division, National Endowment For The Arts  
by Jack Faucett Associates, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland

Designed by Meadows Design Office, Incorporated, Washington, DC  
[www.mdmedia.com](http://www.mdmedia.com)

Printed in the United States of America

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

1997 survey of public participation in the arts : summary report.

p. cm. — (Research Division report ; 39)

Produced by Tom Bradshaw and prepared for the Research Division,  
National Endowment for the Arts, by Jack Faucett Associates, Inc., Bethesda, Md.

1. Arts audiences — United States. 2. Arts surveys — United States.  
3. Arts — United States — Citizen Participation. I. Bradshaw, Tom.  
II. National Endowment for the Arts. III. Jack Faucett Associates. IV. Title: survey of  
public participation in the arts. V. Title: Summary report. VI. Series: Research Division  
report (National Endowment for the Arts. Research Division) ; 39.

NX220.A16 1998

306.4'7'0973 — dc21

98-50433

CIP



202-682-5496 Voice / TTY

(a device for individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired)



Individuals who do not use conventional print materials may contact the  
Arts Endowment's Office for AccessAbility at 202-682-5532 to obtain this  
publication in an alternate format.

This publication is available online: <http://arts.endow.gov>  
the Web site of the National Endowment for the Arts

# CONTENTS

Executive Summary	6
Introduction	9
Purpose	9
Organization of the Report	9
Data Collection and Survey Methodology	10
1997 SPPA Questionnaire	10
Definitions	12
Tables	12
Chapter 1: Attendance at Live Performances and Events	14
Total Attendance, Attenders, and Rates of Attendance	14
Demographic Differences in Attendance and Attenders	15
Differences in Total Attendance and Median Age: 1992–97	23
Factors Affecting Attendance	24
Chapter 2: Arts Participation Through Broadcast and Recorded Media	28
Total Participants and Rates of Participation	28
Demographic Differences in Participation Via Media	29
Use of Personal Computers in the Arts	32
Chapter 3: Personal Participation in the Arts	33
Personal Performance or Creation	33
Demographic Differences in Personal Participation	36
Chapter 4: Socialization	39
Participation by Taking Classes or Lessons	39
Parents' Education	42
Arts Exposure	42
Chapter 5: Participation in Other Leisure Activities	43
Chapter 6: Music Preferences	47

Chapter 7: Arts Participation by Region, State, and Metropolitan Area 49

Regions, States, and Metropolitan Areas 49

Geographic Distribution of Participants and Rates of Participation 50

Chapter 8: Summary and Conclusions 56

Appendices

Appendix A: Background and History 58

Appendix B: Changes in Survey Procedures and Their Potential Effects on Estimates of Arts Participation 62

Appendix C: Data Collection Experiences, Response Rates, And Weighting Procedures 76

Appendix D: Survey Design 78

Appendix E: Estimating Variance For 1997 SPPA Data Items 80

Appendix F: 1997 Survey Questions 82

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Attendance at Arts Events 15
2. Attendance Rates at Arts Events by Demographic Group 16
3. Demographic Distribution of Attenders at Arts Events 18
4. Demographic Distribution of Total Attendance at Arts Events 20
5. Total Attendance and Median Age for Arts Events 23
6. Sources of Information About Arts Events 24
7. Place of Arts Performance 25
8. Relationship of Companions at Arts Events 25
9. Interest in Attending Arts Events More Often 25
10. Barriers to Attendance at Arts Events 26
11. Distribution of Ticket Prices for Performing Arts Events 26
12. Distribution of Admission Fees at Museums 27
13. Participation Rates and Total Participation Via Broadcast and Recorded Media 29
14. Frequency of Listening to Music Via Broadcast and Recorded Media 28
15. Participation Rates Via Broadcast and Recorded Media by Demographic Group 30
16. Demographic Distribution of Participants Via Broadcast and Recorded Media 31
17. Use of Personal Computers for the Arts 32
18. Participation in the Arts Via Personal Performance and Creation 34
19. Rates of Personal Participation by Demographic Group 35
20. Demographic Distribution of Personal Participants 37
21. Participation by Taking Arts Classes or Lessons 40
22. Demographic Distribution of Participants in Arts Classes or Lessons 41
23. Highest Level of Parents' Education 42
24. Respondents' Childhood Arts Exposure 42
25. Children of Respondents Arts Exposure 42
26. Rates of Participation in Leisure Activities 44
27. Participation Rates for Other Leisure Activities by Demographic Group 45
28. Music Preferences 47
29. Rank of Preference for Types of Music 48
30. Attendance Rates for Arts Activities by State and Region 51
31. Attendance Rates for Arts Activities by Metropolitan Area 52
32. Number of Attenders at Arts Events by State and Region 53
33. Total Attendance at Arts Events by State and Region 54
34. Participation Rates Via Broadcast and Recorded Media by Region 55

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1997 nationwide Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) was sponsored by the Research Division of the National Endowment for the Arts. The 1997 SPPA was conducted by Westat Corporation of Rockville, Maryland as a nationwide, stand-alone survey. Previous SPPAs had been supplements to the National Crime Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census. Although many of the questions were exactly the same as those asked in previous SPPAs, the differences in the conduct of the previous surveys make their results difficult to compare with the 1997 results. The 1997 survey design permitted a number of improvements, including a larger effective sample, more geographic details, greater flexibility in questionnaire design, and more timely reporting of the survey results, all of which improve our understanding of arts participation patterns.

From June through October of 1997 a sample of 12,349 people throughout the nation were asked questions concerning (a) their attendance at live arts events, (b) their participation in the arts through broadcast and recorded media, and (c) their personal performance or creation of art. The respondents' replies indicate that half of the U.S. adult (18 and older) population attended at least one of seven arts activities (jazz, classical music, opera, musical plays, non-musical plays, ballet, or art museums) during the previous 12 months. This would translate to 97 million different people attended one or more of these events during the year.

Thirty-five percent of American adults made at least one visit to an art museum or gallery in 1997. Because each visitor made an average of 3.3 visits per year, a total of 225 million visits were made. Other arts activities with high participation rates were musical plays (25 percent), non-musical plays and classical music (both 16 percent), and jazz and dance other than ballet (both 12 percent). Ballet and opera had attendance rates of 6 and 5 percent, respectively. Related activities such as reading literature (63 percent) and visiting a historic park or an arts/craft fair (both about 47 percent) also had high participation rates. These data are reported in detail in Table 1 (see page 15).

The 1997 SPPA also asked questions about Americans' participation in the arts through broadcast and recorded media. For jazz, classical music, opera, and musical plays, the survey covered both watching on video (television and video cassette recordings) and listening to radio and audio recordings (phonographs, cassette tapes, and compact discs); for non-musical plays both video and radio were applicable; and for dance and visual arts only video was relevant. Like prior SPPAs, the 1997 SPPA found substantially higher participation rates for broadcast and recorded media than for live event attendance. For jazz, classical music, and opera, for example, the rates of participation via these media were more than twice the rates for live arts events.

The survey data indicate that more than ten million Americans participated in each of the activities via each medium. Although dance and visual art were seen primarily via television, the other art forms attracted very large numbers of listeners to radio and recordings. An estimated eighty million Americans listened to classical music on the radio, and 67 million to recordings. For jazz the numbers were 77 and 57 million, respectively (see Table 13, page 29).

The 1997 SPPA collected data on the respondent's age, gender, race, education, and household income to permit analysis of arts participation by these socio-demographic variables. An

important finding was that participants in the arts via media were more evenly distributed by race, age, income, and educational level than were participants who attended live arts events.

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 creative photography (17 percent), painting/drawing/sculpting (16 percent), dance other than ballet (13 percent), creative writing (12 percent), and classical music (11 percent). Weaving and other related arts also had high participation rates. The lowest rates were in jazz and opera (both 2 percent) and in ballet (less than 1 percent). Table 18 (see page 34) 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 performing in public 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.

The analysis of the demographic composition of personal performers and creators of art shows that, for most arts activities, the highest rates of participation are found among minority groups. For example, the rate of playing jazz was highest for African Americans and second highest for Hispanics. Hispanics also had high participation rates in other dance and drawing. American Indians had the highest rates of participation in other dance and photography, and Asians had the highest participation rates in opera, musical plays, ballet, drawing, and writing.

Several new questions were asked in the 1997 SPPA. Some of these new questions concerned the extent to which home computers were used in learning about the existence and details of live arts events attended by the respondents (see page 32). About 8 percent of respondents used computers for these purposes. Other questions asked whether the respondent used a home computer to create works of art. New questions also asked about subscribing to series of performances and about membership at art museums. Some questions investigated the reasons respondents did not attend a larger number of arts events and how much they paid when they did attend. Lack of time, lack of a companion, lack of suitable events, and inaccessibility were the primary deterrents to more frequent attendance at arts events. Data about companions indicate that most companions are family members, although dates and friends accompanied the respondents more than 40 percent of the time (see Tables 7–12, pages 25–27).

Several questions asked about socialization in the arts, particularly addressing the amount of exposure to the arts the respondents received as children, the lessons and classes they took at any time during their lives, and how much they were exposing their own children to art. Respondents exposed their own children to the arts at rates similar to their own exposures (see Table 24, page 42). Other questions investigated the respondents' music preferences and determined that the rank orders were quite similar to those found in 1992 (see Table 29, page 48).

Respondents were asked about their rates of participation in leisure activities other than the arts. When the responses were grouped in terms of flexibility of place and time of participation and compared with groups of arts activities with similar characteristics, the patterns of public participation were very similar for arts and other activities (see Table 26, page 44).

Detailed geographical information was collected in the 1997 SPRA. All the data relate to the respondent's residence zip code, not where the arts activity took place. Small samples made comparison difficult for some arts activities and some geographical areas. The data were reported for seven metropolitan areas, ten individual states, and nine regions that include all 50 states (see pages 49–55). Rates of participation, total attenders, and total attendance were tabulated for each geographical component for each live arts activity, and the rate of participation was tabulated for each form of participation via broadcast or recorded media. This information not only will allow for more analysis of geographical differences in arts participation in 1997, but also provide a baseline for future surveys to analyze geographical variables in arts participation over time.

