



When Going Gets Tough:

Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance



**National
Endowment
for the Arts**

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Contents

Preface..... vii

Executive Summary 1

 Summary of Findings 2

 Summary of Implications 4

Chapter I. Introduction..... 5

 About the General Social Survey (GSS) 5

 Historical Backdrop of Arts Attendance Statistics 6

 About this Report 6

Chapter II. Motivations and Barriers..... 9

 Snapshot of Arts Attendance Among U.S. Adults..... 9

 Motivations for Arts Attendance..... 9

 Comparing Motivations for Attendance: Exhibits vs. Performances10

 Comparing Motivations for Attendance Across Performance Types.....11

 Comparing Barriers to Attendance: Exhibits vs. Performances15

Chapter III. Demographic Correlates of Attendance, Motivations, and Barriers 17

 Socioeconomic Status: Educational Attainment and Income18

 Education18

 Income19

 Race and Ethnicity23

Chapter IV. Engaging with the Arts Across Life Stages 29

 Sustaining Social Networks through Arts Participation.....29

 The Intersections of Geography, Race/Ethnicity, Motivation, and Co-Attendance.....29

 Young Adults and Family Life.....31

 Parental Education Level and Family Attendance of the Arts.....33

 Parents of School-Aged and Teenage Children34

 The Arts as We Age.....35

 Declining Health and Social Isolation37

Chapter V. Personal Values and Arts Attendance 39

 Personal Value Statements39

 Political Party Affiliation42

 Public Expressions of Priorities, Values, and Needs.....43

 Special Focus: Interest in Science, Scientific Occupations, and Arts Attendance44

 Implications for Arts Practice45

Chapter VI. Conclusions 47

 Implications for Research.....48

 Implications for Policy49

References 51

Tables

Table II-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Motivations for Attending the Most Recent Event (2012)	10
---	----

Table II-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Interested in, But Did Not Attend, the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Barriers Cited (2012).....	15
--	----

Figures

Figure I-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended “Benchmark” Arts Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Year and Event Type (1982-2012).....	7
---	---

Figure I-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Event Type (2012)	12
--	----

Figure II-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event Attended and Motivation for Doing So (2012)	12
---	----

Figure II-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event Attended and “Major” Motivations for Doing So (2012).....	13
---	----

Figure II-4. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Interested in, but Did Not Attend, the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Event They Wanted to Attend (2012).....	14
--	----

Figure II-5. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Interested in, but Did Not Attend, the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event They Wanted to Attend and Barriers to Not Doing So (2012).....	15
---	----

Figure III-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, or Who Did Not Attend but Expressed Interest in Doing So, by Highest Level of Educational Attainment (2012).....	18
--	----

Figure III-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, and Who Had Free Admission to the Most Recent Event Attended, by Event and by Household Income Quartile (2012)....	20
--	----

Figure III-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults, by Whether They Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, Expressed an Interest but did Not Attend, or Otherwise Did Not Attend, by Self-Identified Social Class (2012).....	21
---	----

Figure III-4. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Reported Socializing with Friends or Family as a Motivation for Their Arts Attendance in the Past 12 Months, by Race/Ethnicity (2012).....	25
--	----

Figure III-5. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Reported Celebrating Cultural Heritage as a Major Reason for Their Arts Attendance in the Past 12 Months, by Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Status (2012).....	25
--	----

Figure III-6. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Age Group and by Events (2012).....	27
--	----

Figure III-7. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Age Group and by Highest Educational Attainment or Current College Enrollment Status (2012).....	27
---	----

Figure IV-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event and by Who (If Anyone) Accompanied Them (2012)	31
--	----

Figure IV-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Aged 18 to 34 Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Motivations for Their Most Recent Event Attended, and by Higher-Education Enrollment Status (2012) 32

Figure IV-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults Aged 18 to 34 Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Household Structure and by Event/s (2012)..... 33

Figure IV-4. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months and Who Have Children Under Age 6, by Most Recent Events, by “Major” Motivations for Attending, and by Whether a Child Accompanied Them (2012)..... 36

Figure IV-5. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months and Who Have Children Under Age 6, by Family Co-Attendance at the Most Recent Event, and by Highest Educational Attainment (2012)..... 36

Figure IV-6. Percentage of U.S. Adults Aged 55 and Older Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, or Who Expressed Interest in But Did Not Attend, by Frequency of Poor Physical Health (2012)..... 37

Figure V-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with Value Statements Significant in Predicting Arts Attendance, by Whether They Attended or Were Interested in Attending the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months (2012)..... 40

Figure V-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, or Who Expressed Interest in Attending But Did Not Follow Through, By Political Party Affiliation (2012) 42

Figure V-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Hold Scientific Occupations or Science-Related Values, by Whether They Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months or Expressed an Interest in Doing So (2012)..... 43

Preface

Audience development profits from asking the same basic questions that guide a journalistic or police investigation. And yet, while arts marketing and outreach efforts have long engaged with all “5 Ws,” national surveys have tended to focus on two, maybe three.

Who attends the arts is an obvious starting-point. For three decades, the [NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts \(SPPA\)](#) has sketched the demographic and socio-economic profile of U.S. art-goers. The *what* is a trickier prospect. In 2012, the survey asked about a broader range of arts activity than in any past year, but it's impossible to know which artists or organizations were responsible for the content enjoyed (or disliked) by the self-reporting attendee. Despite this limitation, we have respectable trend data for adults' attendance at several types of events, by art form or genre.

Where one goes to experience these live arts activities is less documented. But even here the SPPA has made strides in collecting valuable information—about both formal and informal venues of attendance. Knowledge about *when* the attendance occurred is far more restricted—although, based on the SPPA design, it would need to have been in the past 12 months or (starting in 2012) an event recalled from childhood.

This leaves us with *why* and its distant cousin *how*. When, in the past few cycles of the SPPA, the data showed significant declines in attendance for certain art forms, it was natural to seek culprits. Did the drop-off in attendance suggest widespread apathy for those art forms? To what can we attribute reasons for not going—and how many deciding factors lay beyond the control of the survey respondent? As for the *how*: to ask whether the event was free of charge, and who if anyone accompanied the art-goer, would offer a kind of circumstantial evidence—or, so the rationale went—thus pointing to motives or barriers that otherwise would stay hidden.

The [2012 General Social Survey \(GSS\)](#) gives arts researchers a way in. The SPPA's more inflexible design does not permit multiple questions about attitudes or opinions (one exception being a series of questions about adults' music-listening preferences). The 2012 GSS, however, incorporated a NEA module about perceived motivations and barriers in live arts attendance.

The multiple-choice items constructed for these variables benefited from a scan of literature about arts participation, from research necessarily not derived from the SPPA, as well as from the informal feedback of survey methodologists and social science researchers. Although arts-related questions have surfaced repeatedly throughout the GSS' history, there is no direct precedent for the 2012 items. No precedent, that is, among prior GSS questions about the arts. (A National Science Foundation module testing the public's appreciation for science offered a kind of analogue.)

This report takes the extraordinary blend of demographic, socio-economic, and attitudinal variables that compose the GSS, and uses it as a backdrop for discussing the NEA module findings. The authors hone in on the 13% (roughly 30 million Americans) who they describe as audiences in waiting—people who would have gone to a specific event in the last year if not for a barrier they identified. What might sway these non-goers? The answers are presented here and visualized in [Arts Data Profile #4](#), on the NEA's website.

W.H. Auden wrote, “To ask the hard question is simple.” What matters finally is the practical use of this information, concerning not only who goes or who doesn't, and to what event or activity, but why they care and how they view their choices. This report begins a long process of collective learning about such inestimable factors.

Sunil Iyengar
Director, Office of Research & Analysis
National Endowment for the Arts
January 2015

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Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, national surveys have documented declines in U.S. adults' attendance across various types of visual and performing arts events. This downward trend has raised concern and prompted many questions about *why* individuals do or do not choose to attend. Until recently, no nationally representative data were available to answer these questions.

In 2012, the National Endowment for the Arts sponsored a topical module in the General Social Survey (GSS)—a highly regarded, nationally-representative biennial survey of U.S. adults' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions on a wide variety of social issues—to identify not only why and with whom U.S. adults attend the visual and performing arts, but also why individuals decide *not* to attend, after they identify an exhibit or performance that interests them.

Using these new data, this report highlights salient findings regarding the motivations and barriers that influence U.S. adults' arts attendance, while also taking advantage of the wealth of demographic, socioeconomic, and attitudinal variables available in the GSS overall to clarify and enrich discussions about who attends the visual and performing arts.¹ Importantly, the 2012 GSS enables unprecedented insights about **interested non-attendees**—that is, those individuals who express interest in attending exhibits or performances, but do not ultimately follow through. Throughout the report and its conclusions, we highlight similar, different, and unique characteristics of this “missing audience.”

Research on arts participation frequently reports differences across observable demographic categories such as age, gender, educational attainment, and income. This report begins with a similar descriptive breakdown, but then aims to integrate an understanding of the changing roles that arts-going may play over the course of people's lives. In particular, we observe that attending the arts presents individuals with opportunities both to define their own sense of identity, and to socialize and deepen bonds with others in their families and in their broader communities—whether they be communities of geography, communities of shared cultural heritage, or communities of common interests.

¹ Arts attendance in the 2012 GSS is captured by the following questions:

- With the exception of elementary or high school performances, did you go to a live music, theater, or dance performance, during the last 12 months? and
- During the last 12 months, did you go to an art exhibit, such as paintings, sculpture, textiles, graphic design, or photography?

Summary of Findings

Over half of U.S. adults (53.6%, or 126 million) attended at least one art exhibit or live music, theater, or dance performance within the past 12 months.

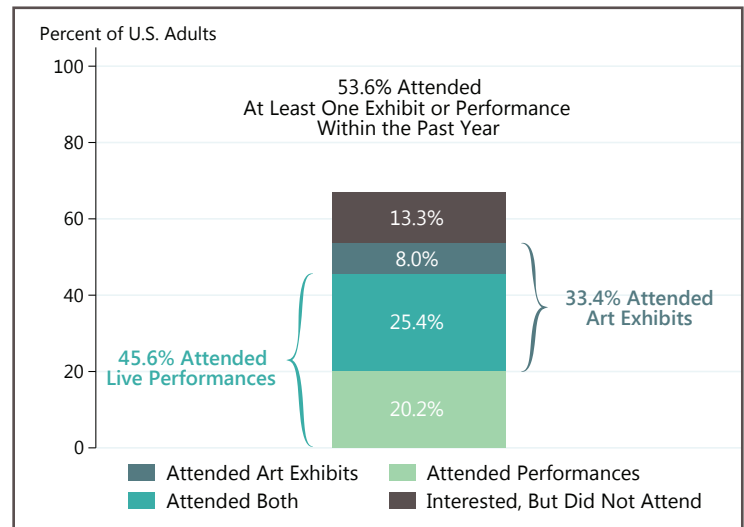
Another 13.3 percent of U.S. adults (or 31 million) were interested in attending at least one exhibit or performance in the past 12 months but refrained from doing so.

Socializing with friends or family members was the most common motivation for arts attendance.

- This was especially true among those attending performances: 76 percent of performance attendees mentioned socializing among their reasons for attending, and over half of performance attendees were accompanied by one or more friends at the most recent event they attended.
- In contrast, 88 percent of exhibit-goers said they wanted to learn new things. While 68 percent of exhibit-goers cited socialization as a motive, only 37 percent of exhibit attendees were accompanied by friends.

Lack of time was the most commonly reported barrier to attending the arts.

- Nearly one in three interested non-attendees—that is, adults who expressed interest in attending a specific exhibit or performance, but ultimately attended neither in the past year—cited lack of time as the most important factor in their decision.
- Parents with young children overwhelmingly cited lack of time as their most important reason for choosing not to attend exhibits or performances in which they had interest. Nearly 60 percent of parents with children under age six said this was the most important reason for not attending.
- Another one in three interested non-attendees said their most important barrier to attending the arts was that it cost too much.
- Other significant barriers to attendance included finding the exhibit or performance venue too difficult to get to (37 percent), and not having anyone to go with (22 percent).



However, racial/ethnic minorities and first-generation immigrants often emphasized different reasons for their decisions to attend or not. For example, compared with individuals in other racial/ethnic groups:

- Non-Hispanic Blacks and African Americans, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders most frequently attended performances to support community events and organizations.
- Non-Hispanic Blacks and African Americans less frequently mentioned socializing among their reasons for attending the arts.
- Among interested non-attendees, Mexican-Americans and non-Hispanic Blacks and African Americans more often said not having someone to go with prevented their attendance. Over 42 percent of interested non-attendees who were Mexican-American and 32 percent of interested non-attendees who were non-Hispanic Black or African American mentioned the barrier of not having someone to go with. Those rates compared with only 17 percent of interested non-attendees from other racial and ethnic groups.
- Mexican-Americans also were more likely to report difficulty getting to the location as a barrier to their attendance. About half (47 percent) of interested non-attendees of this ethnicity said that difficulty getting to the exhibit or performance site prevented their attendance, compared with 35 percent of other interested non-attendees.
- First-generation Hispanic immigrants often attended the arts to celebrate their cultural heritage.

More than age alone, life stages—such as the pursuit of higher education, marriage, child-rearing, and retirement—tend to be predictive of people’s decisions to attend and their motives for doing so.

- Parents with young children under age six often cited socializing with family or friends, learning new things, and celebrating cultural heritage as motives for attending performances accompanied by their children.
- Empty-nesters and retirees typically are motivated by wanting to experience high-quality art, visiting the event’s location or venue, supporting community, and celebrating cultural heritage.
- Retirees often attend the arts with their spouse or partner, and are also more likely to attend alone than are younger adults and non-retirees, especially for exhibits.
- Retirees’ greatest barrier to attendance is difficulty getting to the exhibit or performance location, a common complaint among older individuals in poor health or with physical disability.

Beyond demographics and life stages, socioeconomic status and class identity have implications for whether and why adults attend the arts.

- Individuals who identified themselves as “upper class” were more likely to attend the arts, especially art exhibits, but they were less likely than other attendees to say they wanted to learn new things as a motivation for their attendance.
- Among individuals with very similar household incomes and education, those who self-identified as members of the middle class were more likely to attend than individuals who self-identified as working class.
- Lower-income and working-class adults often said they attend the arts to learn new things, or to support community events and organizations.

Personal values and attitudes offer new insights into who attends the arts.

- Arts attendees more strongly value listening to others’ opinions and diverse perspectives, and being creative and doing things in original ways, compared with non-attendees.
- Arts attendees said, more often than non-attendees, that devotion and loyalty to others is important. Attendees who hold this value more commonly attended performances to socialize with their family members and friends.
- In contrast, arts attendees who emphasized wanting to experience high-quality art also tended to value adventure, excitement, and risk-taking. They were more likely to attend with friends or others unrelated to them.

Summary of Implications

Many U.S. arts organizations that serve the public through the visual and/or performing arts are grappling today with shifting demographics and a rapidly changing participatory culture. Some artists and organizations are more easily adapting to this new landscape; others are challenged to retain and attract new audiences while simultaneously upholding an artistic mission.

The arts and the artistic process itself are understandably the primary focus of most artists and arts organizations. Data suggest, however, that a range of other motivations drive the art-going experience of many U.S. adults. This report invites discussion about how cultural organizations offering art exhibits and live performances can more deeply connect with their audiences' motives for attending.

Interested non-attendees perceive inadequate time as a key barrier to their attendance, but this report suggests that efforts to help people “find time”—in an absolute sense—is only part of the solution. Adults have varying amounts of leisure time, after all, and they constantly make choices about how to spend it. According to the most recent findings from the American Time Use Survey released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics², some 95 percent of Americans ages 15 and older engage in leisure activities on a daily basis. These include: TV-watching, exercising, and socializing, for an average of five hours each day.³ The question becomes: How might arts organizations and presenters better tap into people's personal values and preference sets, to curate activities on which more people choose to spend time? This report offers insights that reach beyond simple demographic categories, providing information about current attendees' and interested non-attendees' life stages, priorities, values, communities, and how these factors relate to arts attendance.

Another key finding is that much of the apparent education- and income-related gap in arts attendance is due not to scant interest among lesser-educated or lower-income adults, but rather to the unique set of barriers these groups experience. When these people choose to attend the arts, they more often attribute their reasons to a wish to support their communities, to celebrate their cultural heritage, or to gain knowledge and learn new things. And for many adults—especially for non-White racial or ethnic groups—not having anyone to go with and being unable to get to the venue are more important barriers than the price of admission. Recognizing such motivations and barriers will help cultural policymakers, funders, and organizations find new paths forward, so that all Americans have greater opportunity to engage with the arts.

² <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.htm> (accessed July 23, 2014).

³ Adults living with a child under age 6, by contrast, averaged less than four hours per day engaged in leisure activities, with the difference made up by more time spent on childcare and work.

Chapter I. Introduction

About the General Social Survey (GSS)

The General Social Survey (GSS) is a highly regarded source of publicly available data concerning adults' attitudes and opinions on a wide variety of timely and important social matters. The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago has conducted the GSS since 1972⁴, and NORC has fielded the survey biennially since 1994, with foundational support from the U.S. National Science Foundation. The nationally representative survey data are widely used by academic and commercial researchers, and purports to be "the most frequently analyzed source of information in the social sciences," second only to U.S. Census data.⁵

Each GSS questionnaire includes a core set of questions covering respondents' demographic characteristics, such as their household and family structure, education, and employment. These items have remained largely consistent over time, permitting trend analysis. In addition, before each survey is conducted, NORC solicits proposals for additional topical modules to collect timely, relevant information on U.S. adults' attitudes and behaviors as they relate to current social issues. Previously fielded modules have covered topics such as religion, immigration, environment, science knowledge and attitudes, volunteerism, and more.

The National Endowment for Arts' (NEA) Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), meanwhile, has served as the preeminent national source of adult data on arts-related behaviors. Since 1982, the SPPA has been fielded six times by the U.S. Census Bureau—most recently in 2012.) Although early SPPA instruments featured a few questions about *attitudes* toward art, collection of these variables was discontinued in the mid-1990s. To an extent, the GSS has helped to fill this knowledge gap. It has included periodic modules designed to capture information about arts-related attitudes and perceptions. Previous arts-and-culture modules were fielded in the 1993, 1998, and 2002 GSS. For 2012, the NEA collaborated with NORC to field the most extensive GSS arts-related module to date.⁶

⁴ The GSS was not conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992.

⁵ See: <http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/research/projects/pages/general-social-survey.aspx>.

⁶ In addition to the GSS arts-and-culture modules fielded in 1993, 1998, 2002, and 2012, several arts-related questions have been asked in other GSS survey years. For example, in the context of a module on altruism and charitable giving, the 1996 survey inquired about donations of time and money to arts organizations. Some arts-related questions have repeated in identical or similar form across the years, but many were collected in only one year, providing only a snapshot in time rather than allowing for trend analysis. See the NEA's GSS Arts Data Profile page for a list of arts-related variables collected in prior GSS survey years.

The 2012 GSS arts module begins by collecting responses to two questions that originated with the 2012 SPPA instrument:

1. With the exception of elementary or high school performances, did you go to a live music, theater, or dance performance, during the last 12 months? and,
2. During the last 12 months, did you go to an art exhibit, such as paintings, sculpture, textiles, graphic design, or photography?

As in the SPPA, these opening items steer the interview into an entirely new series of questions. Yet unlike the SPPA, the 2012 GSS focuses not on *what* people attended, but rather *why* they attended.

Many of these questions echo items in a 2004 survey fielded by the Urban Institute.⁷ That survey measured U.S. adults' responses to seven possible "major" or "minor" motivations for arts attendance. Motivations studied in that survey included: receiving an emotional reward; gaining knowledge or learning something new; experiencing high-quality art; socializing with friends or family; celebrating one's cultural heritage; supporting a community event; or benefiting from low cost of admission (Ostrower, 2005).

In addition to collecting data on the motivations of current arts attendees, the 2012 GSS also reached **interested non-attendees**—in other words, respondents who reported that while they did not actually attend any exhibit or live performance in the past year, there was at least one exhibit or performance they were interested in, or "wanted to go to." The survey then asks those individuals about the relevance of several possible reasons to their decision not to attend.

Respondents who cited multiple reasons for their non-attendance were also asked which single reason was most important in their decision not to attend. These unique data, combined with the wealth of detailed "core" demographic variables and other informative questions on non-arts-specific values, attitudes, and perceptions, provide an unprecedented look at the **missing audiences** for art exhibits and performances.

⁷ The Urban Institute fielded a national survey on cultural participation by telephone during June and July 2004. The random sample of 1,231 Americans over the age of 18 represented a 45 percent response rate. The 2004 survey expanded upon the 1998 Urban Institute survey, *Reggae to Rachmaninoff*. See Ostrower 2005, 2008 for additional information.

Historical Backdrop of Arts Attendance Statistics

Over the past two decades, the SPPA has documented declines in arts attendance among U.S. adults. The NEA's consistent measure of attendance across seven "benchmark" arts activities—ballet, opera, musical plays, nonmusical plays, classical music, jazz, and visiting museums or galleries—has shown that only 33.4 percent of the U.S. adult population attended any of these in 2012, compared with 41 percent in 1992 (NEA, 2013). Figure I-1 depicts this trend.

Among the benchmark arts activities, jazz, classical music, opera, and ballet all saw significant declines in 2008. Attendance at non-musical plays and art museums and galleries decreased significantly in both 2008 and 2012, while attendance at musical plays did so only in 2012. Despite a small observed increase in jazz attendance between 2008 and 2012, the change was not statistically significant.

Consistent with these findings from the SPPA, the GSS also shows a decline in the share of U.S. adults who visited art museums from 1993 to 2012, from a high of 40.8 percent in 1993 to around 37 percent in 1998 and 2002, and finally 32.5 percent in 2012.⁸ The GSS has not consistently measured performing arts attendance, preventing similar trend comparisons for those activities.

Still, this overall decline across the NEA's seven "benchmark" arts types does not fully capture the changing attendance rates for arts and cultural activities. Over the past two decades, the SPPA has also documented declines in attendance at crafts fairs or visual arts festivals and touring parks, monuments, or neighborhoods for their historic or design value (NEA, 2013; Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011). Likewise, attendance at dance performances other than ballet have declined since 2002 (NEA, 2013). Of the SPPA's multiple measures of attendance, only attendance at Latin, Spanish or salsa music performances and attendance at outdoor performing arts festivals held steady between 2008 and 2012, the two years in which these questions first were asked (NEA, 2013).

Declining benchmark arts attendance has been at the core of continuing discussions and efforts aimed at improving attendance. This emphasis has fueled research studies attempting to further illuminate attendance patterns, often through examination of socio-demographic factors. To date, however, limited data have been collected to address *why* people do and do not attend.

8 Over many survey years, the GSS' core questionnaire has included a specific question regarding visits to art museums. In 2012, this question was asked in addition to the NEA's Arts Module question concerning visits to any art exhibits, including exhibits in museums and galleries and in other settings. The question we reference here for discussing trends over time is, "How many times did you visit an art museum during the last year?"

About this Report

This report highlights salient findings from the 2012 GSS regarding motivations and barriers that influence U.S. adults' attendance at art exhibits and live performances. The study also avails of other GSS variables, to clarify and enrich consideration of arts attendance patterns. Although the report does draw on data from multiple GSS survey years, its primary focus is on data collected in the most recent wave, 2012.

The breadth of subjects covered in the full GSS, as well as its repeated panel interviews of respondents across survey years,⁹ allow us to examine a diverse set of personal and social factors in relation to arts attendance. The survey allows a similarly detailed look at people who have expressed an interest in attending an exhibit or performance, but who have not followed through, reminding us that people who have not recently attended the arts may exhibit different behavioral, attitudinal, and demographic characteristics, compared both with current audiences and also with other, uninterested non-attendees. Throughout the report and its conclusions, we highlight similar, different, and unique properties across segments of this missing audience. Due to a lack of data about this cohort, it has been largely ignored by empirical studies of arts attendance.

Chapter II begins with a broad view of arts attendance among U.S. adults, comparing topline statistics from the 2012 GSS with results from the 2012 SPPA. The chapter then introduces common motivations for arts attendance, and presents the frequencies with which each is cited as important. Next, we examine differences in motivations by event type—that is, motivations for people who attended art exhibits versus live performing arts. Motivations for performance attendees are then broken down further, by performing arts type: music, dance, or theater. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the barriers that interested non-attendees reported, and differences in the relative importance of each of these potential barriers for adults who wanted to attend an exhibit, versus those who wanted to attend a performance.

Having presented key terms and overall motivations for (and barriers to) arts attendance, Chapter III turns to examine the relative importance of these variables across demographic groups. Education, income, age, race and ethnicity, and geography are all considered here. Moreover, in addition to the descriptive statistics we present for each of these factors individually, the chapter highlights these factors' interrelatedness—or how many of them mediate the supposed effect of other factors on attendance.

9 Individuals who received the NEA's Arts Module questions in 2012 originally entered the GSS sample in 2008 or 2010, which permits additional analyses incorporating data collected only in those earlier survey waves.

Chapter IV digs deeper into the social circumstances influencing arts attendance, directing our focus beyond an individual's innate demographics to consider how family, social ties, and age-correlated life stages both motivate and deter arts attendance. This chapter discusses how arts attendance is affected by the groups with whom people socialize and by their social, familial, and other life circumstances.

Each of these dimensions can substantially influence individuals' decisions to attend, as well as their motivations for doing so. Our discussion begins with a general overview of **co-attendance**: with whom do people choose to attend the arts? Next, we explore how major life stages and transitions such as pursuing higher education, marriage, raising children followed by an "empty nest," retirement, and finally declines in physical health alter U.S. adults' arts attendance patterns, including not only whether they attend the arts, but also why they attend, and with whom.

Chapter V begins with the assumption that demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status and social ties, and life stages may be useful predictors of attendance, but that even taken together, these factors prove insufficient to explain the significant remaining variation in attendance and the motivations and barriers affecting it.

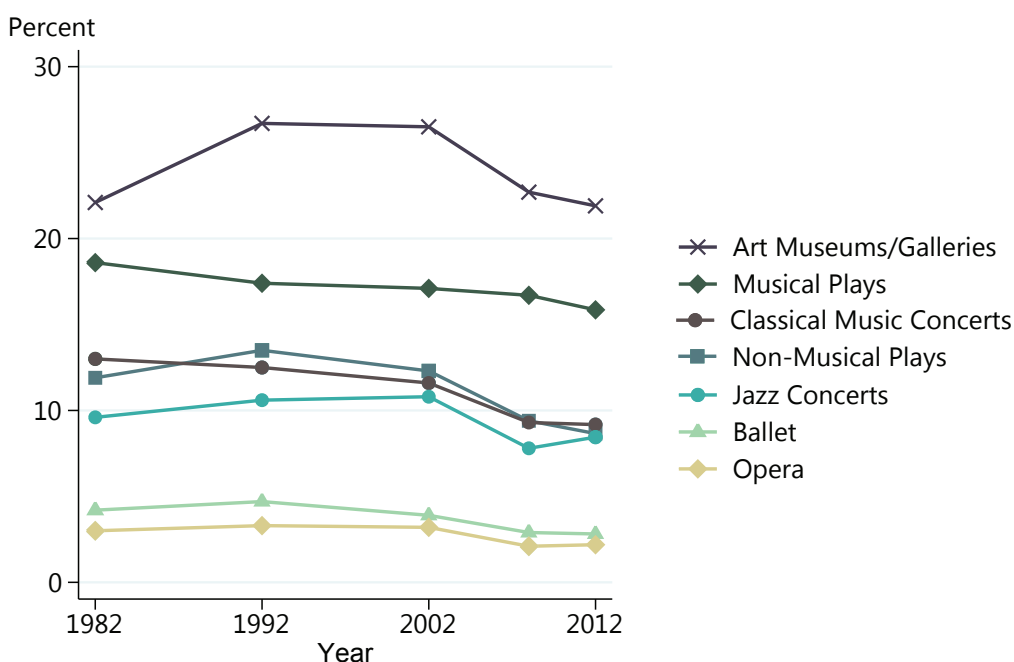
This chapter examines, therefore, the personal values, attitudes, perceptions, and priorities of attendees and interested non-attendees, including more public

expressions of values such as political party affiliation and public spending priorities. Taken together with familiar demographic variables, these values enable us to identify key audience segments, and to suggest strategies for arts organizations that seek to build and sustain their audience base. The chapter concludes with a special focus on attendees who work in scientific occupations, and more broadly adults who are interested in or who value scientific research endeavors.

Finally, Chapter VI concludes with a summary of key inferences one can make based on the analyses presented throughout this report. It discusses the report's implications for arts and cultural organizations, for researchers, and for cultural policy.

Throughout this report, we provide comparisons of arts attendance, motivations and barriers across different groups of U.S. adults. Unless otherwise stated, any differences we highlight in the text are statistically significant at $p < .10$, meaning there is less than a 10 percent chance the difference we reported is simply due to random variation in the sample, based on Chi-square statistical tests of the descriptive cross-tabulations. In the later chapters, we also present results from several multivariate logistic regression models, which allow us to evaluate the significance of specific characteristics while taking into account how they relate to others. Additional information about the survey questions and links to access raw data are provided on the accompanying [Arts Data Profile page](#), on the NEA website.

Figure I-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended "Benchmark" Arts Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Year and Event Type (1982-2012)



Source: Survey of Public Participation in the Arts data, reported in Novak-Leonard and Brown (2011), and NEA (2014)

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Chapter II. Motivations and Barriers

Overall declines in U.S. arts attendance have been well-documented, but advancing the conversation requires data not only on the activities that attendees enjoy, but also on what motivates them to continue attending. Reversing this apparent decline and encouraging greater arts participation requires an understanding of additional factors that prevent or hinder participation, so that cultural organizations, funders, and policymakers might work productively to address or accommodate these changing circumstances.

Over half of the U.S. adult population attended at least one art exhibit or live performance in the past year. Among those who did attend, about half attended both of these types of events. But *why* did they go? Certainly many individuals are motivated by the value they place on experiencing visual artworks or performances. At the same time, the 2012 GSS shows that many arts attendees are also filling other needs and reflecting values beyond intrinsic enjoyment of the arts.

Key Findings

- Socializing with friends and family members is the most common motivation for arts attendance
- Exhibit-goers are most often motivated by a desire to learn new things
- About one in seven U.S. adults expressed interest in, but did not attend, an exhibit or performance
- Common barriers to attendance included lack of time, high cost, and difficulty getting to the location
- About one in five interested non-attendees said they did not attend because they had no one to go with
- Among interested non-attendees, only 38 percent cited high cost among barriers to attendance—but for the majority of those who did, it was the most important barrier

Snapshot of Arts Attendance Among U.S. Adults

As of 2012, GSS data indicate that over half of U.S. adults (53.6 percent) had attended at least one art exhibit or one live performing arts event within the past year. This GSS estimate is consistent with the contemporaneous 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, which similarly found that roughly 49 percent of U.S. adults had attended the visual or performing arts over the same period (NEA, 2013).¹⁰

This topline statistic includes attendance at any of a wide variety of arts events. As shown in Figure II-1, GSS data indicate that the majority of arts attendees—representing 45.6 percent of U.S. adults—went to at least one live music, theater, or dance performance. In addition, over half of attendees—about one-third (33.4 percent) of adults—attended at least one art exhibit in the past year. Finally, one in four adults (25.4 percent) attended both one or more art exhibits *and* one or more live performances.

Motivations for Arts Attendance

Starting with a clear picture of arts attendance rates and trends is important, largely because it sets the stage for more in-depth exploration of the characteristics of individuals who do and do not attend, and more importantly the reasons for either decision. In the 2012 GSS, respondents who reported attending at least one live performance or exhibit during the prior 12 months were asked what motivated their most recent attendance.

Specifically, attendees were asked whether (and to what extent) eight possible motivations spurred them to attend: socializing with friends and family; visiting a specific location or venue; learning “something new”; experiencing high-quality art; supporting community events; seeing a specific performer or works by a specific individual artist; low cost; and learning about or celebrating their family’s cultural heritage.

Table II-1 ranks each of the measured motivations. Socializing with family and friends emerged as the most common motivation for attending the arts. Roughly three out of four adult attendees cited this reason, consistent with findings from a 2004 national study (Ostrower, 2005, 2008).

¹⁰ This aggregate measure of visual and/or performing arts attendance—as captured by the SPPA—includes, in addition to the seven “benchmark” activity types shown in Figure I-1: visiting a park, monument, building, or neighborhood for historic or design purposes; attending a visual arts or crafts fair, an outdoor performing arts festival; and/or attending performances of Latin, Spanish or salsa music and dance other than ballet.

Table II-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Motivations for Attending the Most Recent Event (2012)

Socializing with family or friends	72.9%
Seeing an exhibit or performance at this particular location	65.8%
Gaining knowledge or learning something new	64.1%
Experiencing high-quality art	63.2%
Supporting a community organization or community event	51.2%
Seeing a specific individual artist's performance or artworks	41.2%
Low cost or free admission	40.9%
Celebrating or learning about one's own cultural heritage	24.2%

After socializing, the next most common motivations for arts attendance were wanting to (a) see an exhibit or performance in a specific location or venue (65.8 percent), (b) learn new things (64.1 percent), and (c) experience high-quality art (63.2 percent).

About half (51.2 percent) of adults who attended the arts report having done so to support community organizations or events sponsored by community members. Only two in five mentioned low cost of admission or wanting to see a performance or artwork by a specific individual. Finally, among the structured responses, wanting to learn about or celebrate one's cultural heritage was the least commonly cited, with only one-quarter (24.2 percent) of attendees naming this motivation for their most recent arts attendance.

For each of these possible motivations, art-goers were asked whether it was a "major" or a "minor" reason for attendance. Among those who mentioned low cost or celebrating cultural heritage among reasons for attendance, fewer than half (45-46 percent) said these were major reasons for attending. Similarly, although visiting the specific venue or location was commonly mentioned among individuals' motivations for attending, for many individuals this was only a minor attraction. Only half of those who mentioned the location among their motivations said visiting it was a major reason for their attendance.

In contrast, when attendees mentioned wanting to socialize, to learn, or to experience high-quality art, these motivations tended to be more important, with 60 percent or more of those respondents naming them as major reasons. Likewise, when respondents mentioned seeing a specific individual performer or artwork by a specific artist, this motivation was much more often labeled a major reason

Comparing Motivations for Attendance: Exhibits vs. Performances

Significant differences emerged among the motivations offered by individuals for attending art exhibits versus performances. Indeed, except for low cost, which appears equally to spur attendance at exhibits and performances alike, for all other motivations we see statistically significant differences in the frequency that each is cited by exhibit attendees, compared with live performance attendees. Figure II-2 shows these differences, with the motivations arranged from left to right based on their relative and absolute frequency of mention among exhibit attendees versus performance attendees.

For adults attending art exhibits, wanting to gain knowledge or learn new things was the most dominant motivation, mentioned by 88 percent. In stark contrast, fewer than half (48 percent) of performance attendees shared this motivation. Experiencing high-quality art, visiting a specific location, supporting community, and celebrating cultural heritage were much more commonly mentioned by exhibit attendees than by performance attendees.

Performance attendees were substantially more likely to be motivated by seeing a specific individual performer, whereas exhibit attendees very rarely attended to see artworks by a specific individual artist. Roughly two-thirds (65 percent) of performance attendees mentioned this motivation, and among those individuals, over three-quarters (77 percent) said it was a major reason for going. In contrast, only six percent of those attending art exhibits did so to see artworks by a specific individual artist.

Performance attendees also more frequently mentioned socializing with friends or family among their reasons for attendance (76 percent versus 68 percent of those attending exhibits). Among arts attendees who mentioned socializing as a motivation, however, there was no significant difference between those attending exhibits versus performances in the share (67 percent) who deemed socializing as a *major* reason for attending.

The pattern of differences in motivations for attending exhibits versus performances—including both "major" and "minor" reasons—are similar to those found when considering only the motivations attendees termed major. Yet there were no significant differences by event type in the shares of attendees reporting community or cultural heritage among their major reasons for attending.

Comparing Motivations for Attendance Across Performance Types

Differences in motivation are apparent not only for visual versus performing arts attendees, but also across different performing art types. If a GSS respondent reported attending the performing arts, then he or she was asked whether the most recent event he or she attended was dance, live music, or theater. Figure II-3 highlights significant differences in the *major* reasons performing arts-goers identified for their most recent event attended.

Respondents who attended theater productions were significantly more likely than those who attended dance performances or concerts to say their attendance was motivated by a desire to experience high-quality art or to learn new things.

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of theater attendees mentioned experiencing high-quality art as either a major or minor reason for their attendance, compared with only 52 percent of those attending live music or dance performances. As shown in Figure II-3, almost two in five theater-goers likewise identified experiencing high-quality art as a major reason for their attendance, significantly higher than for dance or music. Theater-goers were also significantly less motivated (than were attendees of other performing arts event types) by the desire to see a specific individual onstage: only half (51 percent) mentioned this among their reasons for attendance overall, and it was a major reason for only about one-third of attendees.¹¹

Concert-goers were least likely to mention wanting to learn new things (42 percent, versus 54-55 percent of dance and theater attendees), and only 17 percent of concert-goers said learning new things was a major reason for their attendance, compared with over 30 percent of attendees at dance and theater productions combined

¹¹ Multivariate logistic regression results confirm these observed differences. In particular, those who attend theater performances report the importance of experiencing high-quality art and the importance of wanting to learn as major reasons for attendance at significantly *higher* rates ($p \leq 0.1$) than their dance- and concert-going counterparts, and they also report attending to see a specific individual perform onstage at a significantly *lower* rate ($p \leq 0.001$).

Instead, three-quarters of concert attendees (78 percent) were motivated by the opportunity to see a specific individual perform, and 65 percent further said seeing a specific individual perform was a major reason for attendance.

On the other hand, whereas experiencing a performance at a particular location or venue was often mentioned by concert- and theater-goers (64 percent of both groups mentioned this motivation) as a minor reason for their attendance, the performance venue was less often mentioned by dance attendees (56 percent). There was no significant difference across performing arts types in frequency of citing location or venue as a major attraction.

Theater and dance attendees were both significantly more likely than concert-goers to attend in support of community organizations or events. But, as shown in Figure II-3, over one-third (35 percent) of dance attendees also identified supporting community as a major reason for their attendance, versus less than one-quarter of concert- and theater-goers (24 percent, combined).

Finally, dance attendees also appear somewhat more likely to mention celebrating cultural heritage (26 percent versus 21 percent, $p = .11$), and theater-goers are less likely to mention low cost or free admission as a major motivation for attending (16 percent versus 22 percent of others, combined). There were no significant differences by event type with respect to socializing with friends or family.

Why Do the SPPA and GSS Performing Arts Attendance Numbers Look Different?

The 2012 SPPA found that just 37 percent of adults attended a live performing arts event, which is notably lower than the 45.6 percent of adults that the GSS indicates attended performing arts events. Why? The SPPA asked specifically about the following types of event: outdoor performing arts festivals; musical and nonmusical plays; classical music, jazz, or Latin, Spanish, or salsa music; dance of any kind; and opera (NEA, 2013). In contrast, the GSS asks more generally whether the individual went to any live music, theater, or dance performance, thus allowing for a broader range of performance types (e.g., pop, rock, folk, hip-hop) to be captured in their responses. The higher rates of performing arts attendance found in the GSS are similar to those collected in data a 2012 SPPA experimental module, which asked more broadly about respondents' attendance at live music performances.

Figure II-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Event Type (2012)

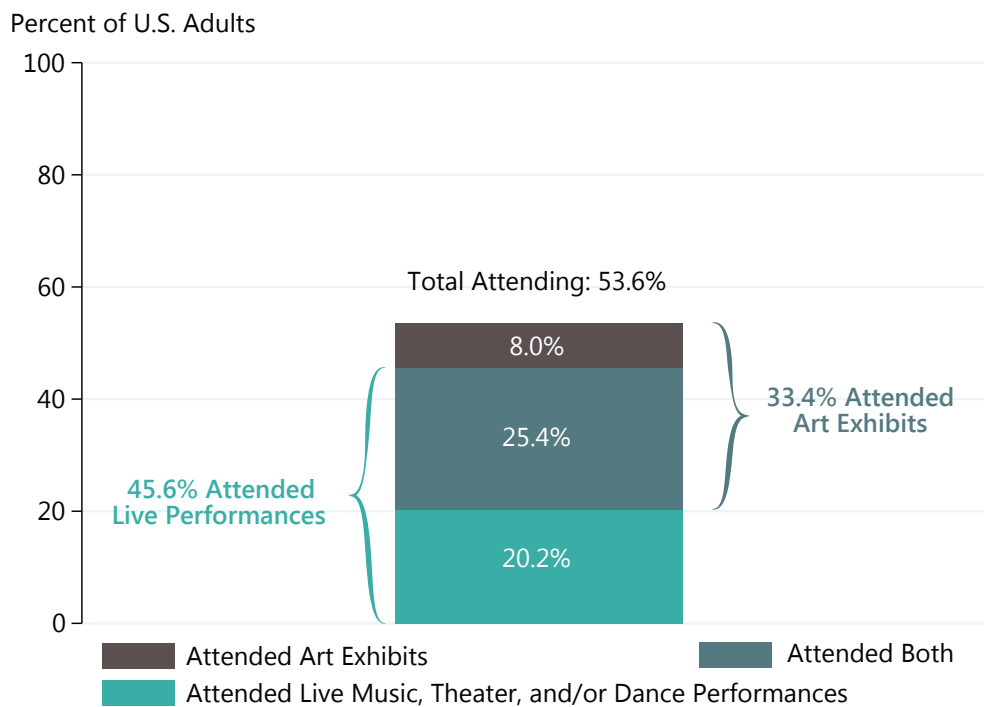
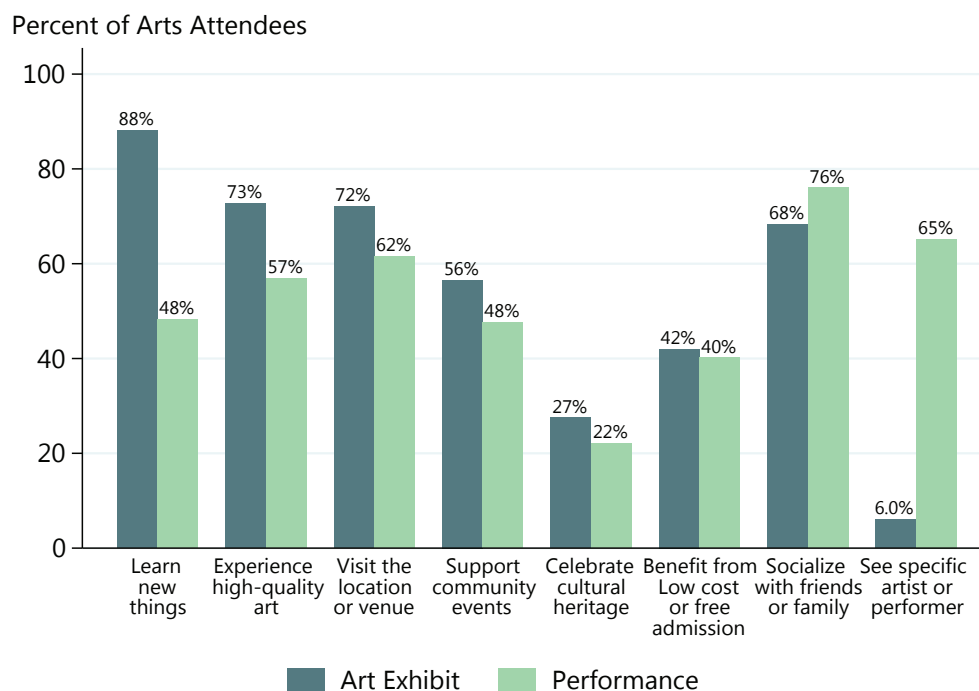


Figure II-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event Attended and Motivation for Doing So (2012)



Barriers to Arts Attendance

The GSS is distinct from other surveys of arts attendance because, after asking respondents whether they attended any art exhibit or live performance in the past year, the survey then follows up with individuals who did *not* attend either event type, asking:

◆ **During the last 12 months, was there a performance or exhibit that you wanted to go to, but did not?**

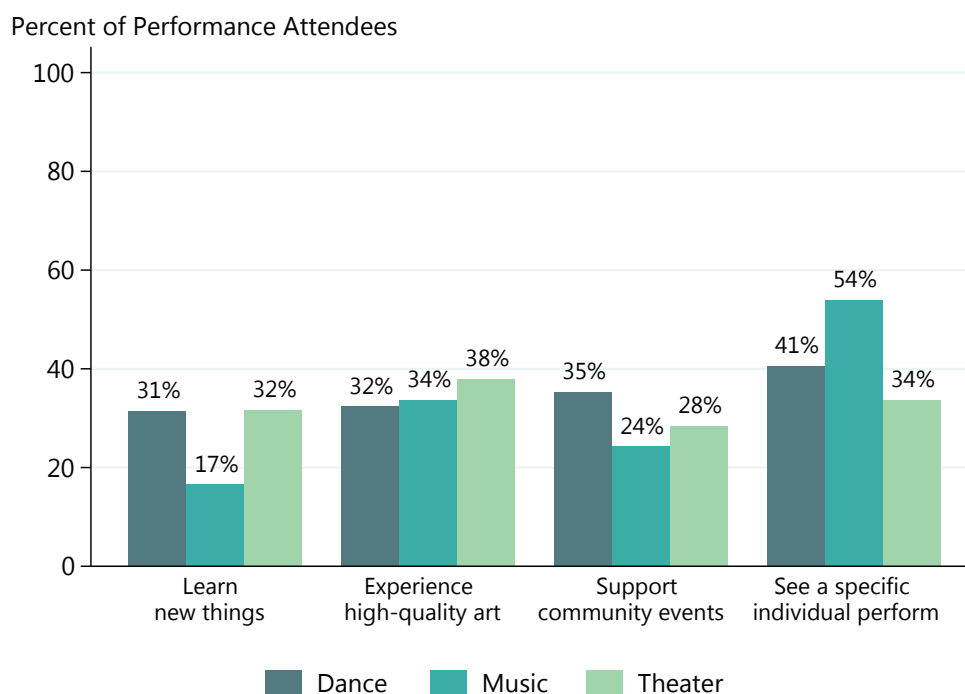
Overall, about one in seven U.S. adults (13.3 percent of the U.S. adult population) were **interested non-attendees**—that is, they expressed an interest in attending at least one exhibit or performance within the past year, but ultimately they chose not to attend. If the respondent said there was a performance or exhibit they wanted to attend, but did not, he or she was then asked whether the event of interest to them was a performance or an exhibit. Some individuals indicated they had interest in both a performance and an exhibit, neither of which they had attended. In that case—that is, if they indicated “both,” then the survey randomly assigned them to answer either a series of questions regarding the most recent exhibit they had wanted to attend (but did not), or the most recent performance.

Interested non-attendees were then asked a series of questions about *why* they did not attend, focusing on the most recent exhibit or performance they wanted to go to. In particular, they were asked to consider whether each of the following potential barriers was important in their decision not to attend: costs too much, too difficult to get there, could not find anyone to go with, could not find the time, did not want to go to that location, or the programs or events were not of interest. The survey also collected “Other Reason” responses.. These included illness or disability, work schedules, and difficulty finding childcare.

Figure II-4 illustrates which arts activities were of interest to those who did not follow through on their desire to attend. More than two-thirds (70 percent) expressed interest in attending a live music, theater, or dance performance, while only about half as many (36 percent) expressed interest in attending an exhibit.

Much of what has been written about the barriers to arts attendance focuses on theory, as opposed to empirical evidence about the factors keeping people away from the arts. Researchers have theorized two distinct types of barrier to arts attendance: perceptual and practical (Keaney, 2008; McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001). Perceptual barriers have to do with the way that people think about the arts based on past experiences and the attitudes and expectations of their social and familial circles (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004).

Figure II-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event Attended and “Major” Motivations for Doing So (2012)



For example, if an individual's friends do not attend arts events, if the individual herself has not previously attended, or if she thinks there will not be others like her in the audience, then she might experience perceptual barriers to attendance. Perceptual barriers can increase the sense of risk people feel, thus making prospective attendance less attractive.

Practical barriers—for example, lack of time, money, and transportation—are key to prospective audience members' decisions whether or not to attend, but it is reasonable to suppose that such barriers come into play only *after* an individual overcomes perceptual barriers (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001). Because the 2012 GSS has subdivided non-attendees into those who expressed a desire to attend a performance or an exhibit and those who expressed no interest in attending, one might conjecture that the interested non-attendee group has overcome at least some perceptual barriers to attendance, making the survey's exploration of practical barriers especially useful. Table II-2. ranks the frequencies with which interested non-attendees reported specific barriers as reasons for not attending. Among the 13.3 percent of the U.S. adult population that makes up the interested non-attendee group, inability to find the time—including due to work—was the most common barrier, cited by nearly half (47 percent) of interested non-attendees. Lack of time was followed by the perception that attendance costs too much (38 percent) and that the venue would prove too difficult to get to (37 percent).

Many individuals reported multiple factors as contributing to their non-attendance, so for these individuals, the interview followed up with a question asking which was their "most important" or primary concern. Among the 47 percent who identified lack of time as a reason for non-attendance, over two-thirds (68 percent) said it was the most important barrier they faced.

Among those who named cost as a barrier to attendance, nearly four out of five (78 percent) identified it as the most important barrier they faced. Conversely, fewer than half of those who said they did not go because it was too difficult to get there, or because they could find no one to go with, felt it was their most important barrier (43 percent and 38 percent, respectively). Finally, among those who said not wanting to go to the event's location was a factor in deciding not to attend, fewer than one in four (23 percent) named the event's location as the most important reason.

Figure II-4. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Interested in, but Did Not Attend, the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Event They Wanted to Attend (2012)

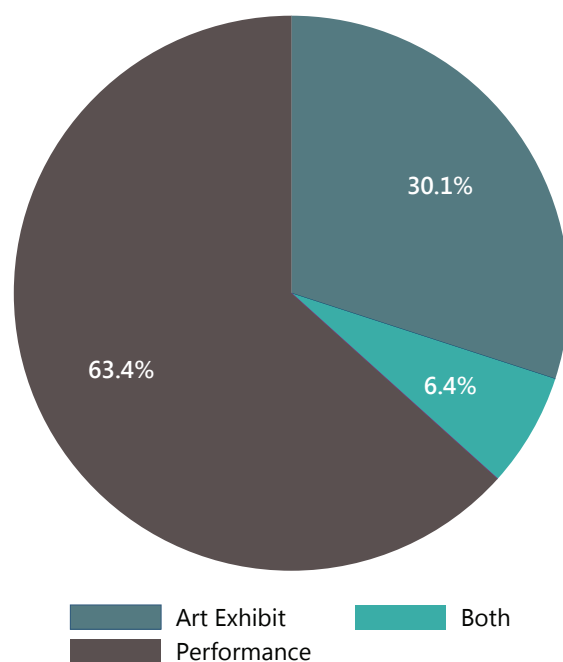


Table II-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Interested in, But Did Not Attend, the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Barriers Cited (2012)

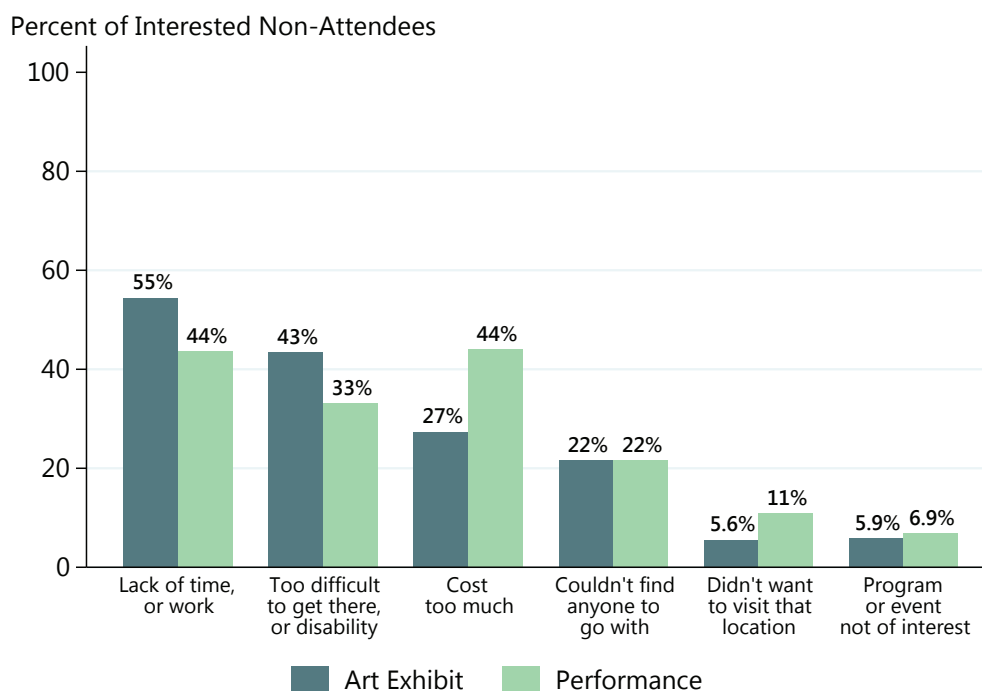
Could not find the time, including due to work	47.3%
Costs too much	38.3%
Too difficult to get there, including difficulty due to physical handicap or illness	36.6%
Could not find anyone to go with	21.6%
Did not want to go to that location	9.0%
Programs or events were not of interest	6.6%

Comparing Barriers to Attendance: Exhibits vs. Performances

Just as motivations for attendance vary significantly for performances versus exhibits, so do barriers differ by event type. Figure II-5 shows the percentages of interested non-attendees who mentioned each barrier with respect to the most recent exhibit or performance they wanted to, but ultimately did not, attend. Again, the data are presented from left to right by relative and absolute dominance of each barrier for exhibits versus performances.

Difficulty getting to the venue and finding the time to do so posed significantly greater barriers for adults interested in attending art exhibits. In contrast, likely reflecting the much higher share of exhibits that people attended for free (61 percent, versus 22 percent of performances), cost was much more often a barrier for those interested in attending performances. Interestingly, not having someone to attend with was equally a concern for them.

Figure II-5. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Were Interested in, but Did Not Attend, the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event They Wanted to Attend and Barriers to Not Doing So (2012)



However, those interested in attending performances were more likely to find the lack of a companion their “most important” barrier. This notion that co-attendance is more important—possibly even a deal-breaker—for *prospective* attendees of the performing arts is also consistent with *actual* attendees’ significantly higher reported motivation to attend performances in order to socialize with family and friends.¹²

Despite minor apparent differences in the percentages of interested non-attendees, by event type, who mentioned that the location or program was undesirable or uninteresting, the sample size was small enough that these differences in percentages were not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$).¹³

¹² Analysis of the American Time Use Survey from 2003-2009 shows that performing arts attendees are more likely to attend with friends than are individuals visiting museums or than individuals going to other entertainments or movie theaters. For more information, see [Time and Money: Using Federal Data to Measure the Value of Performing Arts Activities](#), NEA Research Note #102. April 2011.

¹³ We assessed statistical significance of the differences in frequencies with which (a) reasons for non-attendance (i.e., barriers) were cited overall, and (b) each reason was named “most important,” respectively. However, we did not evaluate, for each individual barrier, whether there exists a significant difference between the frequency of naming that barrier among reasons for non-attendance, and the frequency with which that same barrier was named “most important.”

Chapter III. Demographic Correlates of Attendance, Motivations, and Barriers

Basic demographic factors such as education, income level, race/ethnicity, and age often receive the lion's share of attention, both in research that describes arts attendance behavior and in literature exploring motivations for arts attendance. Too frequently, however, mere demographic segmentation of arts attendees—an exercise that should serve as the starting point for a more detailed discussion of who does or does not attend—impedes a more meaningful dialogue. Narratives that center on innate, immutable demographic categories or socioeconomic circumstances seem to imply that such factors alone have the power to dictate how individuals relate to the arts.

On the contrary, a recent analysis of benchmark arts attendance data from the 2008 SPPA found that demographic variables explained less than 20 percent of the variation in arts attendance (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011). This observation suggests that a more complex set of factors influences individuals' arts participation.

With these caveats in mind, we intend this chapter's presentation of differences in arts attendance, motivations, and barriers across observable demographic characteristics to permit a more nuanced discussion in the next two chapters. There, we demonstrate how life stages, relationships, and personal values enable better understanding current and prospective attendees of the visual and performing arts.

The 2012 GSS does support conventional wisdom and prior research findings about the relationships between arts attendance and some specific demographic factors. For example, education and income are widely recognized as key positive predictors of adult arts attendance, and we begin the chapter with these measures. But as this chapter also demonstrates, examining any one demographic dimension alone cannot provide a complete story, due to the network of relationships each sustain.

Key Findings

- Self-identified social class is a significant predictor of attendance, along with education and income
- Individuals who have less than a bachelor's degree are more likely than those with higher educational attainment to be interested non-attendees
- Young adults ages 18 to 24 attend the arts at high frequency, especially performances
- Lower-income and working-class adults more often attend the arts to learn or support community, and are more often motivated to attend by a desire to experience high-quality art, as compared with adults from high-income households
- Non-Hispanic Blacks or African Americans and Mexican-Americans often report, as barriers to attendance, difficulty getting to the venue/location and not having anyone to go with

Socioeconomic Status: Educational Attainment and Income

Education

As shown in Figure III-1, 76 percent of individuals holding bachelor's or higher degrees reported having attended at least one art exhibit or performance in the past year, and 45 percent attended at least one of each.

By contrast, only 23 percent of individuals with no high school diploma or GED certificate attended arts of any type. These findings are corroborated by SPPA data, which show arts attendance rates increasing alongside educational level (Williams & Keen, 2009), and by additional research studies finding that, among various socio-demographic factors, "education has the strongest and most consistent effect" (Oskala, Keaney, Chan, & Bunting, 2009).

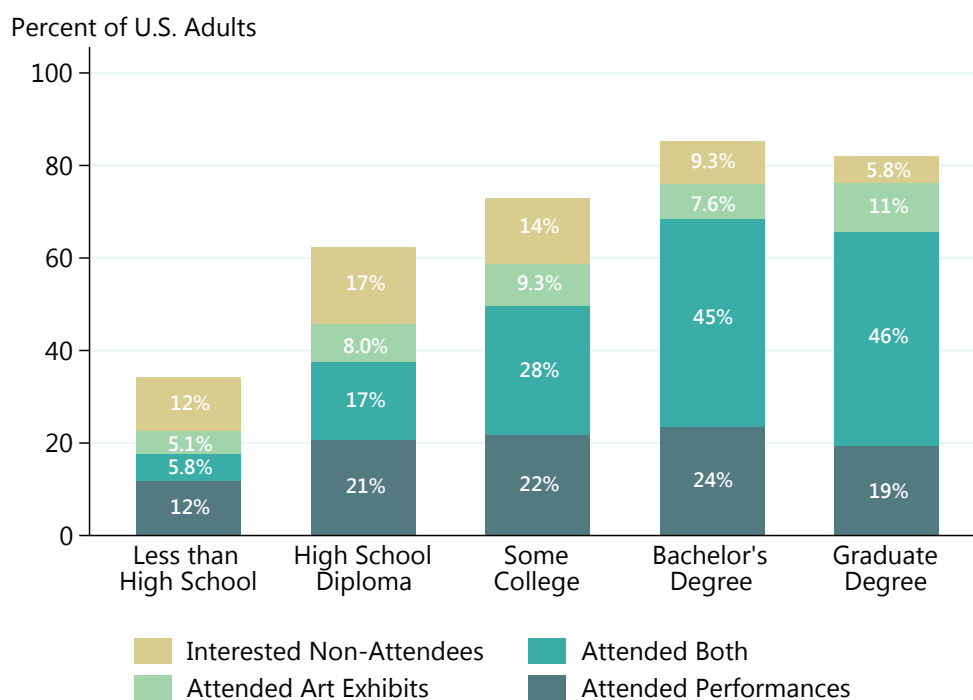
Except among those who did not complete high school, the share of U.S. adults who attended at least one live performance but did not attend any exhibits is fairly constant, hovering around 21.5 percent for those with at least a high school education. Likewise, we find no particular relationship between the share of those who attended only art exhibits and their levels of educational attainment.

Rather, the effect of educational attainment on arts attendance appears manifest in the greater variety of arts events attended by highly educated adults—a pattern that may indicate these adults' more "omnivorous" engagement patterns.¹⁴ Over 45 percent of adults holding bachelor's and higher degrees attended at least one art exhibit *and* at least one live music, theater, or dance performance within the past 12 months—over 2.5 times greater than the attendance rate for both event types among adults with only a high school diploma or GED.

At the same time, the lower attendance rates observed among less-educated individuals should not be construed as simply lack of interest on their part. The grey bars at the top of each stack in Figure III-1 demonstrate that much of this apparent education-related gap in attendance is due to less-educated individuals' substantially higher rates of "interested" non-attendance. For example, among U.S. adults who have high school diplomas or GEDs but no higher education, 17 percent reported they were interested in attending, but ultimately did not attend, an exhibit or performance in the past year. In contrast, only eight percent of individuals holding bachelor's and higher degrees reported similarly thwarted interest.

¹⁴ Peterson and Kern (1996), and subsequent works by Peterson and others, describe cultural omnivores as having "breadth of taste," not discriminating in their attendance between "high-brow" or elite fine art forms and more popular art forms. Omnivorousness is contrasted with voraciousness, where the latter reflects pure frequency of attendance (which, though captured by the SPPA, is not captured in the GSS data).

Figure III-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, or Who Did Not Attend but Expressed Interest in Doing So, by Highest Level of Educational Attainment (2012)



Along these lines, consider the 17-percentage-point gap between overall arts attendance rates for adults who had only some college education and those who completed their bachelor's degrees. For example, 14 percent adults with only some college education experienced an interest in attending an art exhibit or performance in the last 12 months, but did not follow through. If these individuals had acted on their interests, then the attendance rate for this cohort would not differ significantly from the rate for adults who had completed their bachelor's degree programs.

What barriers must be overcome, then, for these individuals with relatively lower educational attainment to follow through on their interest in arts attendance? Although 47 percent of interested non-attendees, overall, say the problem is time- or work-related, this barrier appears more often for interested non-attendees with graduate degrees (65 percent), and less often for adults without a high school diploma (36 percent). People who do not hold bachelor's degrees are significantly more likely than those with higher educational attainment to find the event location or venue too difficult to get to. About two in five (40 percent) in this less-educated group cite barriers to access including difficulties due to physical disability, versus only one in five (22 percent) interested non-attendees with bachelor's or higher degrees.

Motivations for attending the arts also differ across categories of educational attainment, though not always in predictable ways. Individuals with less than a high school diploma or GED are far more likely than other attendees to report that their attendance was motivated by wanting to learn (76 percent vs. 63 percent), wanting to see an exhibit or performance in a particular location or venue (79 percent vs. 65 percent), supporting community (62 percent vs. 51 percent), celebrating cultural heritage (47 percent vs. 23 percent), and low cost of the event (59 percent vs. 40 percent).

These responses foreshadow the wide variety of factors, beyond income and educational attainment, that influence decisions about arts attendance. On the other hand, only 56 percent of performance attendees with less than high school education mentioned socializing with friends or family members as a reason for attending, substantially lower in comparison to the 76 percent of performance attendees citing social motivation overall. Moreover, only 67 percent of exhibit attendees with less than a bachelor's degree said they were motivated by a desire to experience high-quality art, versus 80 percent of exhibit attendees with bachelor's or higher degrees.

By contrast, adults holding bachelor's and higher degrees more often reported that their arts attendance was motivated by a desire to experience high-quality art, compared with attendees who had less formal education. Celebrating cultural heritage—a strong motivator among those with less than a high school education—was also cited significantly more often by individuals with graduate

degrees. This higher frequency of cultural heritage as a motivation for attendance at the two extremes of the educational attainment spectrum is explained in part by the relatively high proportions of first-generation immigrants at these two extremes in the GSS sample.¹⁵

Income

Educational attainment and income are both frequently used by social science researchers as proxy measures for individuals' socioeconomic status. Human capital literature provides both theoretical and empirical evidence for a strong causal impact of education on earned wages.

Since arts attendance and income both generally increase with higher levels of education, it is not surprising to find that individuals with higher household incomes are more likely to have attended the arts in the past year. Recalling the 53.6 percent rate for U.S. adult attendance overall, we find that only 37 percent of those in the lowest income quartile attended an exhibit or performance in the past year.

Attendance rates increase steadily with higher income, to a high of 72 percent among individuals in the top income quartile. However, this overall trend masks differences in the interactions of income and attendance patterns for art exhibits versus live performances. Specifically, while performance attendance rates do increase strongly with income, the trend for art exhibits is less stark.

A closer look at the relative cost of attending exhibits versus performances provides some insight into these differences. Overall, 38 percent of arts attendees reported that their last arts event was free of charge. Still, well over half (61 percent) of adults who attended exhibits did so for free—paying no admission fee—versus only 22 percent of those attending performances. And, as shown in Figure III-2, cost of attendance *does* matter, especially for individuals and families facing tighter budget constraints.

Adults in the lowest quartile of household income were twice as likely as those in the highest quartile (25 percent versus 12.5 percent) to have said that low cost or free admission was a major reason for their arts attendance. In addition, adults in the lowest income quartile who attended the performing arts were more than twice as likely to have attended a free performance, compared with adults in the top income quartile (35 percent versus 16 percent), and lower-income adults were also significantly more likely to attend free exhibits.

This price motivation remains salient, even when considering only those who attended free exhibits and performances. Among those who attended free exhibits or

¹⁵ Additional statistics on motivations across educational attainment, as well as additional demographic characteristics are provided in the Appendix to this report.

performances, only 17 percent of adults in the top income quartile indicated that free admission was a major reason for attendance. In contrast, across the three lower income quartiles, 29 percent of attendees at free events said that low cost was a major reason.

Other differences in motivations for arts attendance by income are, to varying extents, correlated with those found for educational attainment, as discussed earlier in this chapter. As with adults who hold no high school diploma or GED, individuals in the lowest income quartile are notably more likely than those in the higher three quartiles to mention wanting to learn (76 percent versus 62 percent), visiting a particular location (74 percent versus 64 percent), supporting community (62 percent versus 49 percent), and celebrating cultural heritage (37 percent versus 22 percent).

In contrast, income seems to have little if no effect on socializing as a motive for attending the arts. Similarly, the desire to experience high-quality art is also no more common among higher income quartiles, in contrast to the trend observed for higher educational levels. The lowest quartile is most often motivated by this desire, at 70 percent, compared with 60 percent of attendees in the highest income quartile who mentioned this motivation.

Individuals in the highest income quartile are also significantly less likely to report their attendance as motivated by learning about or celebrating their family's cultural heritage; as noted above, they are also less

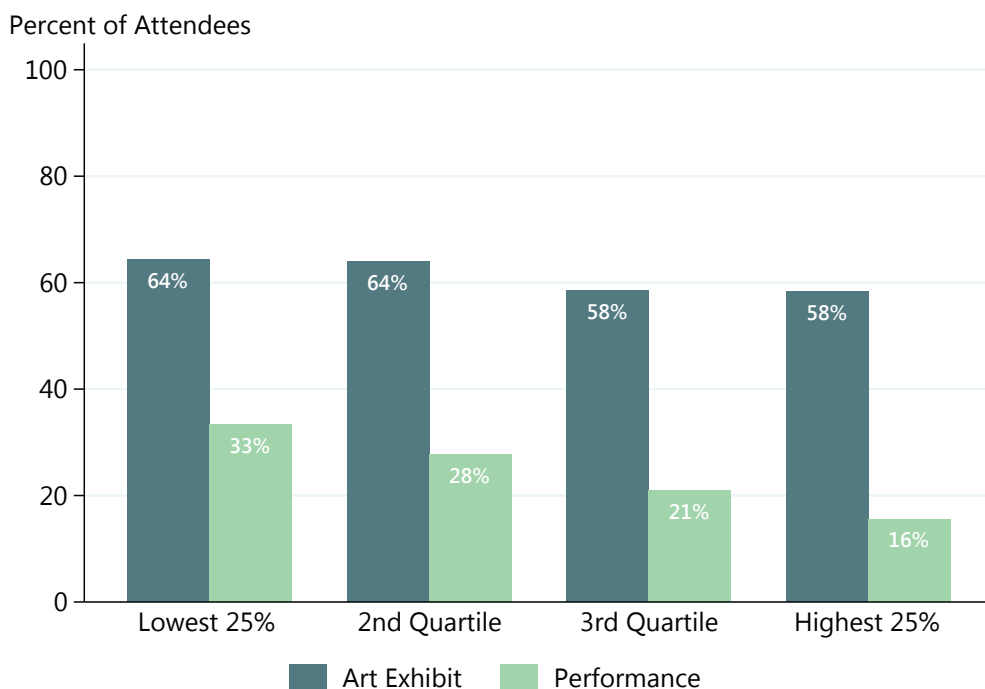
motivated by low cost or free attendance than are adults in the three lower quartiles.

Across the income distribution, barriers expressed by interested non-attendees tend to mirror those expressed across the range of educational attainment. Not being able to find the time, including due to work conflicts, is increasingly mentioned not only as education increases but also at higher incomes. Just 31 percent of those in the lowest income quartile mention time constraints, compared with 53 percent of those in higher income quartiles.

The opposite trend holds for lack of easy access as an attendance barrier: 44 percent of adults in the lowest income quartile said the exhibit or performance was too difficult to get to, and 24 percent of interested non-attendees in the lowest income quartile named these access issues as their most important barrier to attendance. In contrast, only 24 percent of those in the highest income quartile mentioned this issue, and less than 10 percent said it was the greatest barrier they face.

Inability to find someone to go with, while most commonly cited by the lowest income quartile (32 percent), is least commonly reported by individuals with incomes in the third quartile (12 percent), while over one in five (22 percent) in the top quartile report this barrier. Not surprisingly, individuals in the highest income quartile, like those in the most highly educated group, were least likely to cite cost as a barrier to attendance. Both cost and lack of time were more commonly mentioned by respondents with

Figure III-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, and Who Had Free Admission to the Most Recent Event Attended, by Event and by Household Income Quartile (2012)



below-median household incomes as compared to those with above-median household incomes and those with household incomes in the lowest quartile.

Self-Identified Class Rank

Sociologists make a distinction between “subjective class identity” and “objective class position.” Most Americans describe themselves as middle class, even though their occupational skills, economic market position, opportunities, and general life chances would objectively place them either higher or lower on the social class hierarchy (Hout, 2008; Jackman & Jackman, 1983).

A recent study of Americans’ subjective and objective social class and voting behavior argued that over two-thirds of the upper-middle class had a deflated sense of their class position, while a third of the working class had an inflated perception of theirs (Sosnaud, Brady, & Frenk, 2013). Clearly, more than economic interest or position is at stake in shaping how people understand their social positions, make choices, relate to others, and act.

As a complement to the personal and household income information collected by the GSS, survey respondents were asked to identify the social class to which they believed they belonged: lower, working, middle, or upper. A subsample of respondents were also asked whether they felt they were better or worse off than their parents had been at their same age. Most respondents identified themselves as either working class (45 percent) or middle

class (44 percent), with just nine percent identifying as lower class and two percent as upper class.

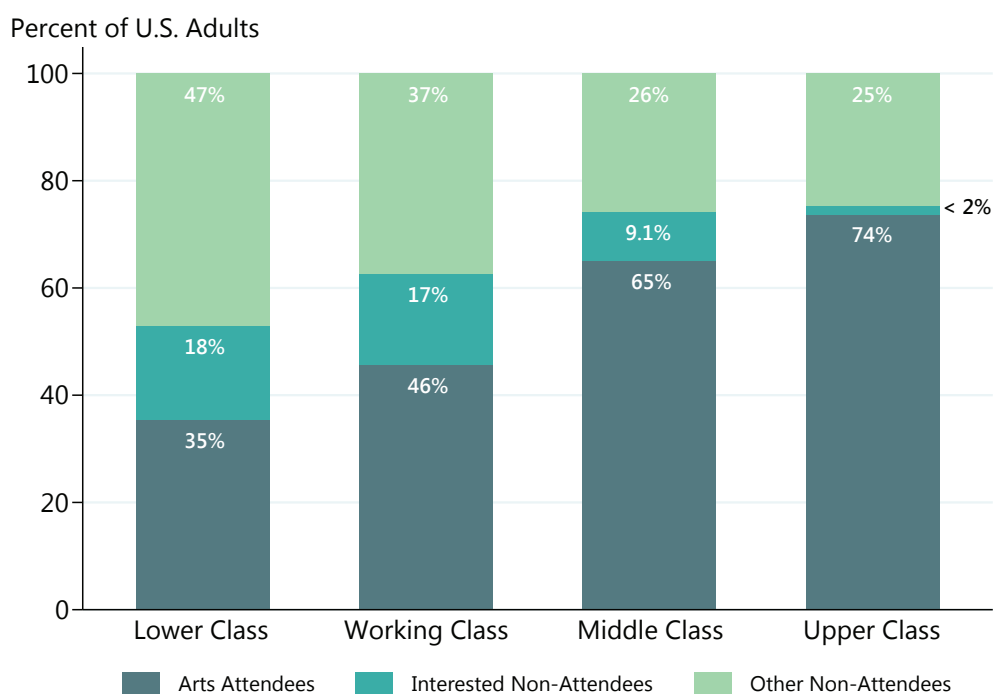
Over 70 percent of individuals identifying as upper class were in the highest quartile of household income, and held bachelor’s or higher degrees. On the other extreme, 86 percent of individuals identifying as working or lower class had less than a bachelor’s degree, and 62 percent had below-median household incomes. Given this strong correlation between class identification, income, and educational attainment, it makes sense that arts attendance rates should increase with social class rank. At the same time, as social class rank increases, the share of adults who are interested non-attendees shrinks precipitously, with fewer than two percent of those identifying as “upper class” expressing barriers to attendance (see Figure III-3).

These descriptive findings are consistent with results from the 1998 GSS, which revealed that people who self-identified as lower or working class reported lower levels of cultural attendance than respondents who self-identified as being upper-class (Wilkinson, Waters, Bygren, & Tarlov, 2007).

And yet, even after controlling for income and education, we find that individuals who self-identify as middle or upper class are significantly more likely to attend the arts, compared with those who identify as working class.¹⁶ For

¹⁶ This result was obtained via multivariate logistic regression, with additional controls for respondent’s gender, presence of children under six years of age in the household, and rural residence.

Figure III-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults, by Whether They Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, Expressed an Interest but did Not Attend, or Otherwise Did Not Attend, by Self-Identified Social Class (2012)



example, among individuals whose household income was around the national median, approximately 60 percent identified as working class and 36 percent as middle class. Despite having very similar household incomes, only 48 percent of those identifying as working class attended at least one exhibit or performance, compared with 67 percent who identified as middle class.

This class distinction in arts attendance is strongly tempered by differences in each class' typical educational attainment. Still, higher self-identified social class nonetheless remains a significant positive predictor. Comparing U.S. adults with near-median household incomes and similar educational attainment, we find that those who identified as middle class had 14 percentage points higher probability of attending an exhibit in the past year, versus those who identified as working or lower class.

In addition, individuals who identify as working class but who say their standard of living is "much better" than their parents' was at the same age are significantly *less* likely to have attended the arts in the past year. In those cases, they had over ten percentage points of lower probability than did others of the same income, education level, and self-identified class.

In contrast, adults who similarly find themselves enjoying a much better standard of living than their parents but who self-identified as upper class had over 20 percentage points *higher* probability of arts attendance than others with the same levels of income, education, and self-identified class. This higher topline statistic is mainly driven by these individuals' significantly higher attendance rate for art exhibits (59 percent, versus 37 percent among respondents who identified as middle or upper class, but who did not see themselves as much better off than their parents).

There are several theoretical concepts from the sociological literature that may help to explain this finding. Weber (1978) identified three components in his theory of social stratification: class (economic relationship to the marketplace), status (honor or prestige), and party (political affiliation or power). Status is particularly important in this context because it identifies a non-economic component of behavior around which people organize and distinguish themselves from others.

Bourdieu (1979) elaborated on Weber's insight about the importance of status groups and their capacity to draw boundaries through activities that confer honor and prestige on their own members and exclude others. He defined taste cultures as the social processes through which people classify themselves by their habits, manners, and specialized activities (e.g., attending arts events, especially "high art") and thereby make meaning about the social world.

By displaying a taste or appreciation for art through attending arts events, individuals define themselves both internally and to others as belonging to a higher social class, one based on cultural knowledge and social know-how (attitudes, preferences, manners, etc.)—which Bourdieu termed cultural capital—rather than based on financial wealth. DiMaggio (1982, 1987) built on Bourdieu's work in arguing that the shaping of taste cultures in the U.S. was a function of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century rise of an American upper class, which used the distinction between high culture and popular culture to define itself and distinguish itself from both working-class and middle-class "mass culture."

As with educational attainment and household income, there are noticeable and significant variations in motivations for arts attendance by self-identified class. For example, given the observed higher rate of art exhibit attendance among potentially new "upper-class" individuals, it is noteworthy that these individuals are significantly *less* likely than middle-, working-, and lower-class individuals to report that wanting to learn was a major motivation for exhibit attendance. This finding echoes Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital: those who identify with higher social classes in which adults are presumed already to be very knowledgeable about the arts may be less willing to say that they attended the arts out of a desire to learn.

The need Bourdieu suggested, for upper-middle-class and upper-class individuals to demonstrate a taste for the arts, also appears when we consider interested non-attendance. Excluding parents of young children (under age six)—over two in five individuals who reported they couldn't find the time to attend arts nonetheless reported they spend several evenings per month socializing with friends, and one in four spent at least one night per month going out to bars.

Probing more deeply in using multivariate logistic regression, we find this result is largely driven by responses among highly sociable, highly-educated adults who self-identified as middle class, among whom 88 percent attended at least one exhibit or performance in the past year, and 64 percent attended both. These findings also raise some concern about the possibility of social desirability bias¹⁷ in some individuals' responses, namely that individuals who self-identify with higher social classes may be more likely to claim interest in attending the arts as a marker of their good taste, cultural capital, and social identity.

Among working-class and lower-class individuals, arts attendance also provides a means to define one's social identity, but perhaps with somewhat different motivations. Arts attendees who self-identified as working class were significantly more likely than those who identified with

17 Specifically, though the count is sufficiently small to have no appreciable impact on our overall estimate of the share of U.S. adults who are interested non-attendees, the importance of the time constraint itself may be slightly overstated.

higher social classes to mention, as motivations for their attendance, learning about or celebrating their cultural heritage and supporting their community. About 15 percent of working- and lower-class individuals said celebrating cultural heritage was a major reason for their recent arts attendance, versus less than eight percent of those who identified as middle or upper class. Likewise, 30 percent of individuals who self-identified as working or lower class said supporting community was a major reason for their attendance, versus 25 percent of individuals who identified as middle or upper class.

Geography

Geographic setting, including both the region of the country where an individual resides and also the urbanicity of one's community, is associated with differences in arts attendance rates, motivations, and barriers to attendance. Many of these differences are insignificant after controlling for other predictors of arts attendance, such as age or educational attainment. In addition, geography is correlated with relative representation of individuals of different racial and ethnic subgroups, which complicates independent discussion of either of these factors—that is, geography or race/ethnicity. Below, we highlight the few significant geographic differences we observe based on urbanicity and geographic region.

Individuals living in central cities of the nation's largest metropolitan areas significantly differ in their attendance patterns and motivations, compared with those residing in outlying areas, and especially compared with rural residents. These urban dwellers are almost equally as likely to have recently attended an exhibit as a performance, and they are more likely than other U.S. residents to name wanting to learn as a major reason for attending performances. In addition, about one in five of these individuals say celebrating cultural heritage is a major reason for their attendance. This significantly greater emphasis on celebrating cultural heritage is explained, in large part, by the higher concentration of first-generation immigrants in these cities.

In contrast, residents of rural areas are significantly more likely than are residents of large U.S. cities to cite supporting community as a major motivation for attendance. Among rural residents attending arts events, 62 percent mentioned supporting community as a motivation, compared with 47 percent of arts attendees who reside in large cities. Notably, among adults motivated by a desire to support community in rural areas, about two-thirds reported it as a major motivation; about half of those in cities considered it major.

Across Census divisions—the most detailed regional information available in the 2012 GSS—only a few significant differences emerged when considering arts attendance rates as well as motivations and barriers.

First, residents of the northern Plains,¹⁸ Pacific, and New England states attend the arts at higher rates than individuals elsewhere in the country. Some 36 percent of Plains residents and 40 percent of New England and Pacific region residents attended an art exhibit within the past 12 months, versus 33 percent in the U.S. adult population overall. Among Plains residents, this higher rate of exhibit attendance may indicate greater availability of free exhibits in these states: some 96 percent of Plains residents who went to art exhibits attended them for free, versus 68 percent of Pacific region residents, and 58 percent of art exhibit attendees elsewhere. Similarly, just over half (51 percent) of Plains and Pacific states residents attended a live music, theater, or dance performance in the past year, a rate matched only in the U.S. Northeast (New England plus Middle Atlantic divisions).

Second, residents of the West South Central states—Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana—were more likely than others to say celebrating cultural heritage was a reason for their arts attendance. Some 40 percent mentioned this among their reasons for attendance, and about one in four attendees (24 percent) in this region said celebrating cultural heritage was a major reason for attendance.

Race and Ethnicity

Racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. differ markedly in their rates of arts attendance, reasons for attending, and their reported barriers to attendance. But as with each of the demographic categories explored thus far, race and ethnicity are not reliable predictors of attendance when considered alone. Earlier studies have found that much of the difference across racial and ethnic groups in arts attendance can be explained by differences in these groups' average educational attainment, including formal arts education (Borgovani, 2004; DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990; Novak-Leonard, forthcoming 2014). Even among adults with bachelor's and higher degrees, however, the 2012 GSS reveals significant differences across racial and ethnic groups.

Overall, Mexican-Americans and non-Hispanic Whites have very similar rates of arts attendance across all education levels. Non-Hispanic Black or African Americans¹⁹ with less than a bachelor's degree have significantly lower rates of arts attendance compared with similarly educated individuals from other racial and/or ethnic groups. For

18 The U.S. states referred to as "Plains" states here are those in the West North Central Census division: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

19 The General Social Survey refer to African Americans throughout the survey instrument as "Blacks," and coding for the race variables used in this section categorizes these individuals together as "Black or African American." The majority of Black individuals in the sample do identify as African American; however, the sample also includes, for example, Black adults who identify their place origin as the non-Spanish West Indies.

example, 45 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders²⁰, 46 percent of non-Hispanic Whites, and 49 percent of Mexican-Americans with less than a bachelor's degree attended an exhibit or performance within the past year, in contrast to 37 percent of Blacks and African Americans.

Reasons for arts attendance also vary by race and ethnicity. Despite socializing with friends and family being the most commonly reported motivation for arts attendance overall, Figure III-4 shows notable differences by race and ethnicity, both in overall frequency of mention, and in the overall share of adults who reported socializing as a major reason for attendance. In particular, non-Hispanic Blacks and African Americans, and Hispanics of non-Mexican origins were less likely than respondents from other racial or ethnic groups to mention socializing with family and friends among their reasons for attendance. On the other hand, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and individuals identifying two or more races were more likely to mention social motivations, with biracial and multiracial adults significantly more likely than all other groups to identify socializing with family or friends as a major reason for attendance.

Wanting to learn is the motivation most commonly reported by U.S. adults who attend exhibits. However, Mexican-Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and biracial or multiracial adults are significantly more likely to identify wanting to learn as a major motivation for attending exhibits than are non-Hispanic Whites.

Differences across racial and ethnic groups also emerge across two key, but somewhat less commonly reported motivating factors: low cost and a desire to support community. American Indians, Alaska Natives, and adults who identify as biracial or multiracial were substantially more likely than other groups to cite low cost or free admission as a major motivation for attending performances.

Among all racial/ethnic groups, non-Hispanic Blacks and African Americans most often cited supporting community as a major motivation for attending performances. American Indians and Alaska Natives more often cited supporting community as a major motivation for attending exhibits, and they were less likely to attend performances for that reason.

Overall, U.S. adults were less likely to indicate celebrating cultural heritage as a motivation for arts attendance, versus any other motivation asked about in the GSS. However, the rates at which this motivation is cited vary dramatically across race and ethnicity groups, as shown in Figure III-5. While only 16 percent of non-Hispanic Whites mentioned celebrating cultural heritage as a motivation for attending arts events, two-thirds (67 percent) of American Indian/Alaska Natives did, as well as 51 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Interestingly, among first-generation Hispanics, celebrating cultural heritage was significantly more often a major reason for their arts attendance, compared with U.S.-born Hispanics.

The most common barriers for interested non-attendees also differed across racial and ethnic minority groups. The most significant departures from the barriers impacting the interested non-attendee group overall were among Black or African American and Mexican-American populations.

²⁰ GSS race/ethnic categories that have been coded as Asians or Pacific Islanders include: Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander.

What Motivates First-Generation Immigrants?

Socializing? First-generation immigrants who attend the arts are much less likely to indicate that socializing was a major motivation than are attendees overall. First-generation immigrants are also more likely than the average arts-goer to attend on their own.

Cultural Heritage and Community? First-generation European immigrants are much more likely than U.S.-born, non-Hispanic Whites to include celebrating cultural heritage among reasons for attending the arts. First-generation immigrants, regardless of region of origin, join American Indians and Alaska Natives and non-Hispanic Blacks and African Americans in being more likely to see supporting community as a major motivation for attendance.

For first-generation immigrants, the arts serve as means of nostalgic connection to the customs and culture of their former home and of taking pride in their country of origin. This observation is made by Fernandez-Kelly (2010), who also suggests that first-generation immigrants might also attend the “high” arts as a means of signaling their desire to assimilate into America’s upper classes. Farrell and Medvedeva (2010) suggest that immigrants find, by attending museum exhibits, a balance between participating in “high” culture and connecting with their heritage.

Figure III-4. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Reported Socializing with Friends or Family as a Motivation for Their Arts Attendance in the Past 12 Months, by Race/Ethnicity (2012)

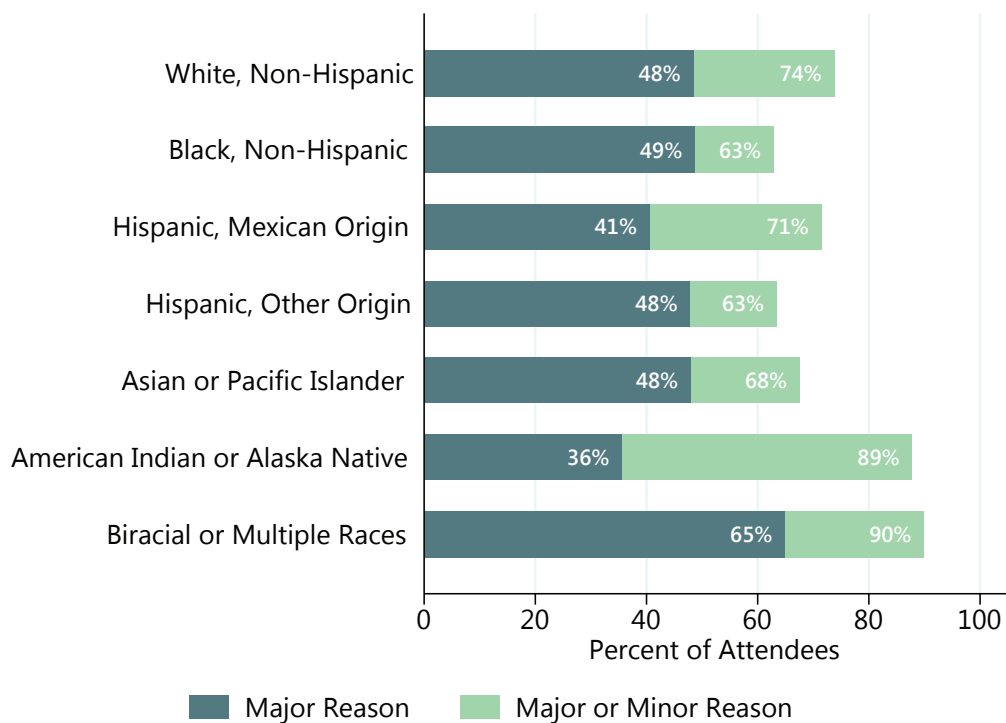
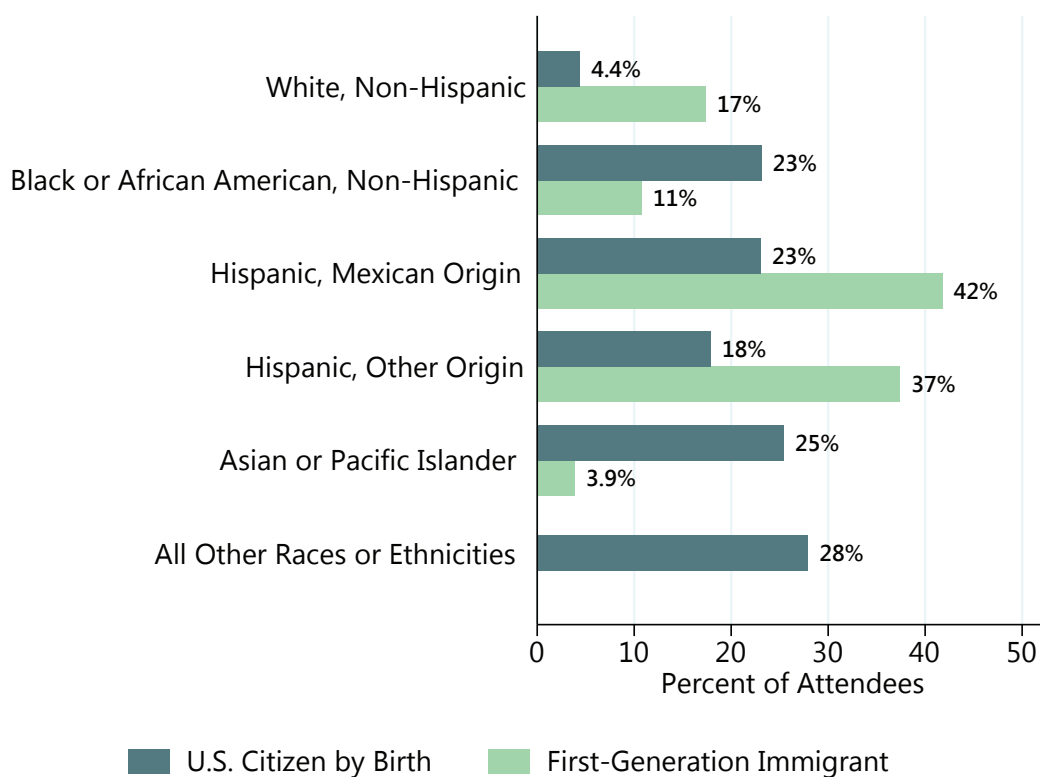


Figure III-5. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Reported Celebrating Cultural Heritage as a Major Reason for Their Arts Attendance in the Past 12 Months, by Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Status (2012)



Among adults who did not attend an exhibit despite being interested, 60 percent of individuals in these two racial/ethnic groups mentioned that the exhibit location was too difficult to get to, versus only 40 percent of U.S. adults from other racial/ethnic groups.

Finally, 34 percent of non-Hispanic Black or African Americans and Mexican-Americans indicated that their inability to find someone to go with was a barrier to attending the arts, twice the rate observed (17 percent) among interested non-attendees from other racial or ethnic groups.

Aging Audiences?

The perception that, over time, arts attendees have aged more rapidly than the general population has provoked periodic concern within the non-profit arts field.²¹ Upon a first look it may seem surprising, then, that the GSS shows overall rates of arts attendance are actually highest among individuals ages 18 to 24 and 35 to 44. About 58 percent of both age groups attended at least one exhibit or performance within the survey year, and in both groups, about one in four attended both an exhibit and a performance within the past year.

However, individuals aged 35 to 44 were much more likely to attend art exhibits overall, and much less likely to attend only a performance, as compared with adults aged 18 to 24. Over one-third (34 percent) of respondents ages 35 to 44 had attended an art exhibit in the past year, versus 27 percent of respondents ages 18 to 24. But, whereas nearly one-third (32 percent) of those aged 18 to 24 attended only performances, the share of individuals attending only performances among those aged 35 to 44 dropped to less than one in four (23 percent).

These results appear to stand at least partially in contrast to the 2008 SPPA finding that those in their 40s and 50s were more likely to attend benchmark arts activities than were younger adults (Williams & Keen, 2009). The apparent discrepancy may be due in part to the relatively high rates of performance attendance among 18-to-24 year olds shown.

As discussed above, the broader categories of event types used by the GSS allows for inclusion of popular music and other events not captured by the SPPA's "benchmark" arts numbers. Thus, while traditional arts organizations may remain concerned about relatively lower rates of attendance for their own respective art forms among young adults, these findings suggest that young adults are, in fact, interested in and attending arts overall.

The importance of socializing with friends and family differs across age groups, and is highest among 18- to 24-year-olds and 35- to 44-year-olds (78 percent, compared with 73 percent of arts attendees as a whole, cited this reason for their attendance). In contrast, adults aged 65 and older are less likely than younger adults to say socializing was among their motives for attendance.

Wanting to learn and to experience high-quality art are both significantly more commonly mentioned reasons for attendance at the two ends of the age spectrum. Roughly 80 percent and 77 percent of attending 18- to 24-year-olds cited learning and experiencing high-quality art, along with 72 percent and 70 percent, respectively, of attending adults ages 65 or older.

Age-related differences in major reasons for arts attendance are further complicated by differing rates of attendance for live performances versus exhibits. For example, adults aged 25 to 44 are more likely than others to attend performances out of a desire to see a specific individual perform, but they are also less likely to say that seeing artworks by a specific artist is a major motivation for attending exhibits.

Adults ages 25 to 34 are also more often motivated to attend exhibits that have low cost or free admission, and they are relatively less motivated than other age groups by the exhibit's location. In contrast, adults aged 35 and older more often attend exhibits to support their community, and those 45 to 54 years of age who attend exhibits are more strongly motivated by visiting a specific exhibit location and learning about or celebrating their cultural heritage.

Over 70 percent of interested non-attendees aged 18 to 64 perceived either high costs in attending or lack of time—including due to work commitments—as their greatest barriers to attendance. As individuals age, however, the location or venue for art appears increasingly as a concern, either because the exhibit or performance venue is too difficult to get to, or because the location itself is not one they wish to visit. About half (52 percent) of interested non-attendees aged 45 and older named these location-related barriers, while only one in four adults (26 percent) aged 18 to 44 did so.

Finally, especially among seniors 65 and older, the lower likelihood of attendees' citing socializing with friends and family as a reason for attendance—combined with the higher likelihood of interested older non-attendees to say they could find no one to go with—suggest that part of the reason for relatively lower rates of arts attendance among older individuals may be social isolation. The next chapter explores this possibility.

Some of the apparent age-related findings are explained by differences in education level. In particular, among respondents aged 75 and older, only 26 percent hold

21 NEA Research Report, *How a Nation Engages with Art: Highlights from the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA)*. <http://arts.gov/publications/additional-materials-related-to-2012-sppa#sthash.Z5uXddRZ.dpuf>

Figure III-6. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Age Group and by Events (2012)

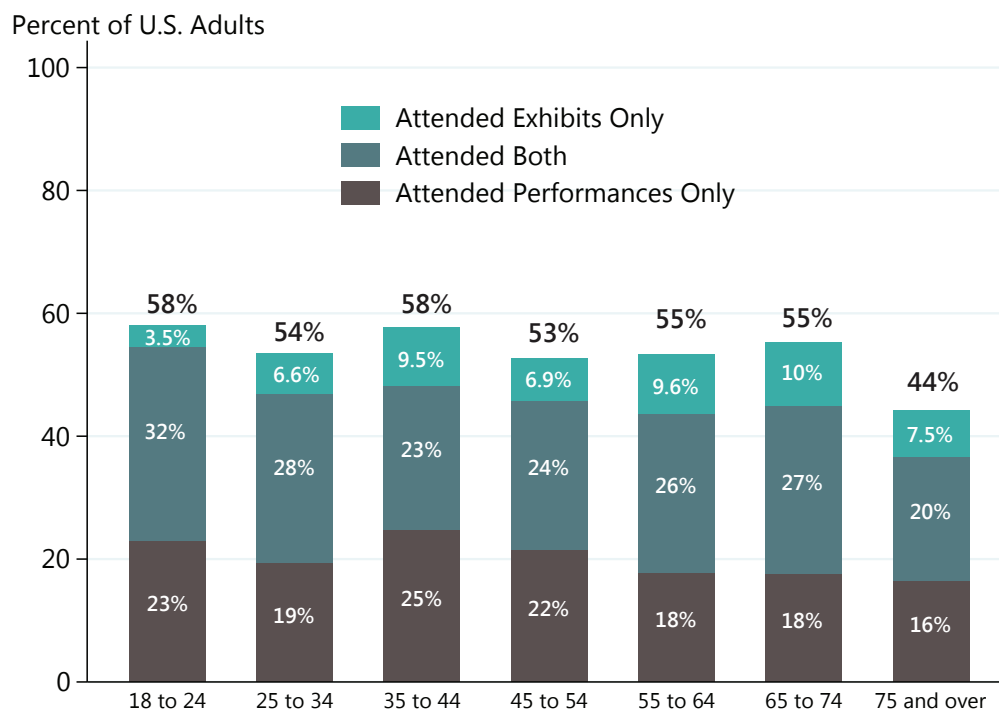
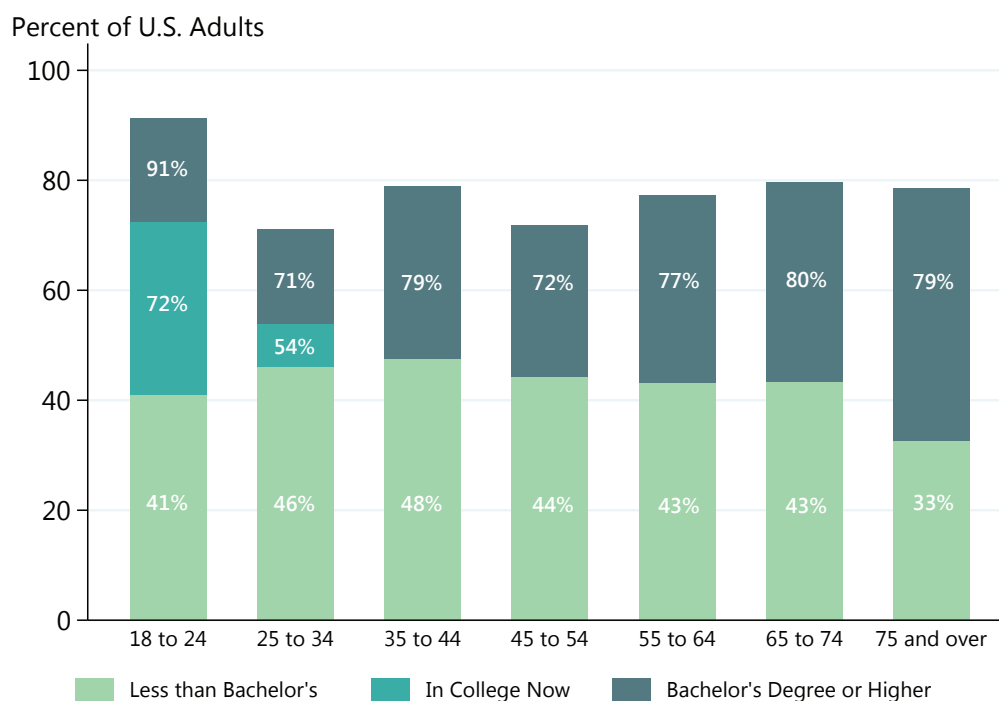


Figure III-7. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Age Group and by Highest Educational Attainment or Current College Enrollment Status (2012)



bachelor's or higher degrees, compared with 31 percent of those under age 75. Closer examination of attendance rates by age and education, as shown in Figure III-7, reveals no significant drop-off in attendance among adults aged 75 and over who have bachelor's degrees. Although it would be inappropriate to attribute all age-related declines in attendance to differences in educational attainment *per se*, factors correlated with *both* education and aging—for example, health status, as cited in Grossman (1972)—may also play a role in the relatively lower attendance rates observed among older versus younger groups.

Finally, as Figure III-7 indicates, individuals who are currently enrolled in college also have higher arts attendance than their “highest educational attainment” would suggest. Individuals in this group are in the process of transitioning across educational categories, and their rate of arts attendance is accordingly higher than those for other adults who have not earned bachelor's degrees, but is also still lower than among those who already have completed bachelor's or higher degrees.

This result reminds us that an individual's highest educational attainment should not be considered as a static demographic factor. Both the process of transition—enrollment in college or university classes, here to the exclusion of work—and the *outcome*—for many, attainment of a two- or four-year college degree, entering the workforce, and in some cases establishing an independent household for the first time—may influence both whether and why people do (or do not) attend the arts.

In the next chapter, we will explore a variety of life transitions, including being involved in higher education, becoming married, and entering into retirement, and how they potentially affect patterns of arts attendance.

Chapter IV. Engaging with the Arts Across Life Stages

Considering life stages and circumstances, rather than age alone—just like examining personal relationships and commitments, rather than individual responses alone—can shed new light on the myriad factors affecting attendance. This approach also can provide a more nuanced understanding of the barriers for subsets of the population who would like to attend the arts, but who nevertheless refrain from doing so. The impulses and barriers to arts attendance for “interested non-attendees” can change as they go to college, marry and have children, as their children grow older and leave home, and after they retire.

Key Findings

- About half of U.S. adults who attend arts do so in the company of friends
- Full-time students aged 18 to 34 are more likely to attend the arts than young adults not in school
- Married men are more likely than unmarried men to follow through on their interest in attending the arts
- Parents with children under age six are less likely to attend, and when they do, reasons for attendance may depend on whether the child accompanies them
- Parents of children under age six who hold bachelor’s degrees are less likely than less-educated parents to have brought their children along to the most recent event they attended
- Empty-nesters attend exhibits from a desire to visit the specific location or venue, and supporting community organizations or events is often a major reason for their attendance at performances
- Retirees more frequently report that not having someone to go with prevented their attendance

Sustaining Social Networks through Arts Participation

As we reported in Chapter II, the most common reason that individuals identify for attending the arts is to socialize with friends and family. So it is not surprising to find that about half of arts attendees were accompanied by one or more friends.

Attending arts events with friends is more common for performances than exhibits. We find about 51 percent of performance-goers, and 37 percent of exhibit attendees, were accompanied by friends. Excluding young adults aged 18 to 24, and after controlling for marital status and the presence of young children in the home, the tendency to attend the arts with friends does not appear to vary significantly by age, gender, or education level. However, having young children at home does significantly decrease the odds of attending the arts with friends.

Performing arts attendees are more likely to bring along friends and close or extended family members. Overall, about 45 percent of performance attendees, versus 34 percent of exhibit attendees, were accompanied by extended family members, or by both family members and friends. Approximately one-third of performance-goers (31 percent) and of exhibit-attendees (38 percent) reported attending with only their close family members—that is, with their spouse, partner, or child.

Attending the arts on one’s own is relatively uncommon overall, but adults aged 25 to 34 and older Americans (aged 65 and older) were about twice as likely to attend the arts on their own, compared with adults between the ages of 35 and 54. This may correlate with these groups’ relatively higher rates of exhibit attendance. People who go to exhibits are significantly more likely to attend on their own (9.7 percent) than those attending performances (3.2 percent), and exhibit attendees aged 55 and older are also significantly more likely than younger adults to attend alone.

The Intersections of Geography, Race/Ethnicity, Motivation, and Co-Attendance

The relationships between geography and motivations for arts attendance discussed in Chapter III extend to the exploration of co-attendance as well. Overall, residents of the largest U.S. cities more often attended exhibits with only their close family members: their spouse or partner, one or more children, or both. On the other hand, rural residents are significantly more likely to attend performances with close and extended family members. Similarly, rural residents who attend the arts to support their community (see Chapter III) are more often

accompanied by both family members and friends than are city-dwellers. Adult city-dwellers, on the other hand, are more likely than residents from other areas to attend with just their friends or other unrelated individuals (35 percent, versus 29 percent among other U.S. residents), when attending the arts to support their communities.²²

When their motivation for attendance is to celebrate cultural heritage, non-Hispanic Black or African Americans and multiracial individuals most often attend the arts accompanied by family members as well as their friends. In contrast, Hispanics of non-Mexican origin are more likely to celebrate cultural heritage by attending the arts with only their friends or other unrelated individuals; on the other extreme, American Indians and Alaska Natives who attend the arts for this purpose are more likely to attend with only their close or extended family members.

Life Transitions and Arts Attendance among Young Adults, Ages 18 to 34

With whom individuals attend the arts is heavily influenced not only by their predominant social networks, but also by the priorities and circumstances that arise during life transitions and stages, many of which may also affect their social networks.

Between the ages of 18 and 34, many young adults go through a number of transformative life stages: pursuit of higher education, getting married, and starting a family. Each of these correspond to changes in arts attendance rates, co-attendance patterns, and motivations for (or barriers to) attending the arts. Being married or living with a cohabitant partner, regardless of one's age, is also associated with different arts attendance patterns overall—so, for the ensuing discussion, we include all age groups.

In looking at the life transitions central to many peoples' young adulthood experiences, we find that distinctions emerge not only in rates of attendance, but also in the motivations and barriers that affect individual decisions. Study of these dynamics can illumine the factors at play for young audiences—a demographic increasingly coveted by so many arts organizations.

²² Results from a multinomial logistic regression model, controlling for age, race/ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, marital status, presence of young children at home, and event type.

Arts Attendance among Higher Education Students

Full-time students pursuing bachelor's or graduate degrees attend the arts at significantly higher rates than their peers. Among young adults who are full-time students,²³ 74 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds and 64 percent of those aged 25 to 34 report having attended at least one art exhibit or performance within the past year, compared with 55 percent of 18-to-24-year-old non-students and 53 percent of 25-to-34-year-old non-students.

Students pursuing higher education may benefit from greater access to lower-cost arts and cultural events. On the other hand, these students' arts attendance patterns may also reflect differences in individual tastes or preferences—preferences that may in turn be correlated with their initial decision to pursue higher education.

The motivations that most commonly impact full-time students differ from those of their non-student peers. Figure IV-2 highlights major differences between students' and non-students' reasons for arts attendance.

Students are more likely to mention wanting to experience high-quality art, and they are more often compelled by wanting to celebrate their own cultural heritage. In contrast, non-students in this age group are more frequently motivated to attend an arts activity because they want to support community organizations or events.

Low-cost or free admission, which was previously noted was a strong motivator of adults aged 25 to 34, did not differ in frequency of mention for full-time students versus non-students. Compared with their non-student peers, however, full-time students who were interested in an exhibit or performance but ultimately did not attend more often cited as barriers the cost and difficulty in getting to the venue.

These findings are similar to results reported from an earlier survey of university students in the United Kingdom, which found that opportunities for social interaction, reasonable price, and perceived entertainment value were critical in attracting university students to attend the performing arts (Kolb, 1997). Ticket prices were the most frequently cited barrier to students' performing arts attendance. In that study, however, it also appeared that income or financial constraint was not the limiting factor so much as perceived entertainment value.

²³ The GSS reports current enrollment in school via the labor force status variable WRKSTAT, which also includes codes for working full-time, working part-time, temporarily not working, being unemployed or laid off, retired, keeping house, or other responses to the question: "Last week were you working full- time, part- time, going to school, keeping house, or what?" If respondents indicate they were doing more than one of these, then interviewers are instructed to "give preference to the smallest code number that applies." The implication of this instruction is, if an adult student is enrolled in school part-time but also reports working full- or part-time, their response is coded to one of the "working" variables. For simplicity, we define current full-time enrollment as adults who already hold a high school diploma or GED certificate, and whose response to WRKSTAT is coded as "currently in school."

Specifically, in the UK study, among students who said they did not attend arts due to cost, the price they associated with arts attendance was lower than the amount they spent on other forms of entertainment. In addition, after price of admission, students' most frequently mentioned reason for non-attendance was their belief that the performance would be "boring."

In contrast to the apparent focus on entertainment value observed in the UK study, another relatively recent report found that, while college students most commonly cite socializing as a motivation for arts attendance, many also say they seek to be challenged by the arts (Brown, 2007). These results are consistent with the 2012 GSS finding that U.S. higher-education enrollees emphasize wanting to learn and to experience high-quality art.

Young Adults and Family Life

Young adults aged 18 and 34, and who have no cohabitant partner, spouse, or children living at home, have higher rates of arts attendance than their peers. They are most motivated to attend art exhibits and/or performances in order to socialize with friends and family; experiencing high-quality art is of relatively less importance to these individuals. Lower cost is more likely to motivate their attendance than it is for their peers with children, perhaps due to the latter group's typically higher household income. Still, like adults in their age group who have children at home, their attendance at art exhibits is much more likely to be driven by a desire to learn.

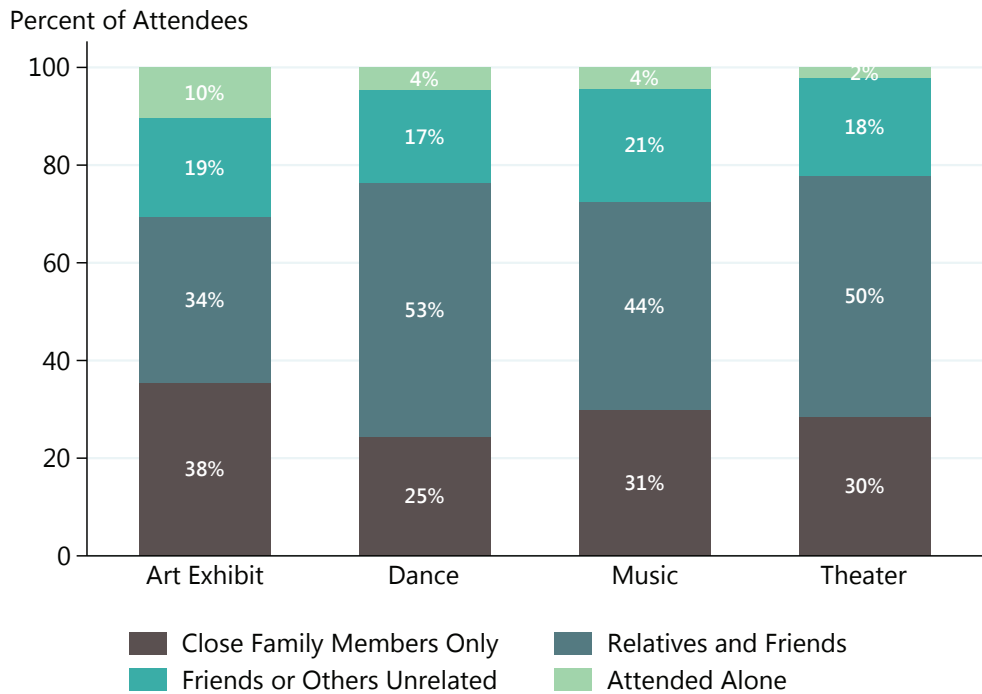
Spouses and Partners

Overall, men and women attend the arts at almost identical rates: 54 percent of men and 53 percent of women attended at least one exhibit or live performance.²⁴ Women were, however, more likely than men (14.8 percent, versus 11.5 percent) to report that they were interested in attending a performance or exhibit, but did not follow through. Among married men and women, however, notable shifts occur in how individuals approach arts attendance.

Men and women who are married, as well as those with cohabitant partners, are more likely to attend the arts with their spouses or partners, and they are also significantly less likely to attend with friends or alone. Men in particular more commonly visit art exhibits and attend performances with their spouses or partners: the probability of attending with a spouse or partner is 23 percentage points higher for married men than for married women, and the probability of visiting an art exhibit with *only* a spouse or partner (no children, friends, relatives, or others) is 13 percentage points higher for married men than for married women.

24 This finding differs from prior SPPA results, which show that women attend at higher rates than males at many specific arts events. However, the data for the 2012 SPPA experimental question that asks generally about "going to live music reveal that 31 percent of males attended "live music" and 32 percent of females did (31 percent, overall, for U.S. adults). This difference by gender in the SPPA is likewise not statistically significant.

Figure IV-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Most Recent Event and by Who (If Anyone) Accompanied Them (2012)



In contrast, women are more likely than men to attend exhibits or performances with a child or other relative, and their probability of attending the arts alone is 2.5 percent lower than men's. Notably, among men aged 35 and older, married men are both more likely to attend the arts, and less likely to say they were interested in attending but did not follow through. Some 56 percent of men ages 35 and older with spouses or cohabitant partners attended the arts, versus 43 percent of their unmarried male peers.

On the other hand, over 17 percent of unmarried men ages 35 and older expressed interest but did not attend the arts in the past year, versus only 10.5 percent of their married peers. This seems to confirm the conventional wisdom that men's arts attendance is largely due to the positive influence of their spouses, though the tendency may apply only to men who were interested non-attendees prior to marriage.

A relatively small number of studies have looked specifically at marital status and the performing arts.²⁵ In those studies, marriage has consistently been associated with lower rates of arts attendance (Montgomery & Robinson, 2010). As our results above indicate, however, the interaction is more complicated once gender is taken into account.

A 2004 study across ten U.S. cities found that unmarried women attended 21.4 percent more arts performances than unmarried men. And yet, among married respondents, men

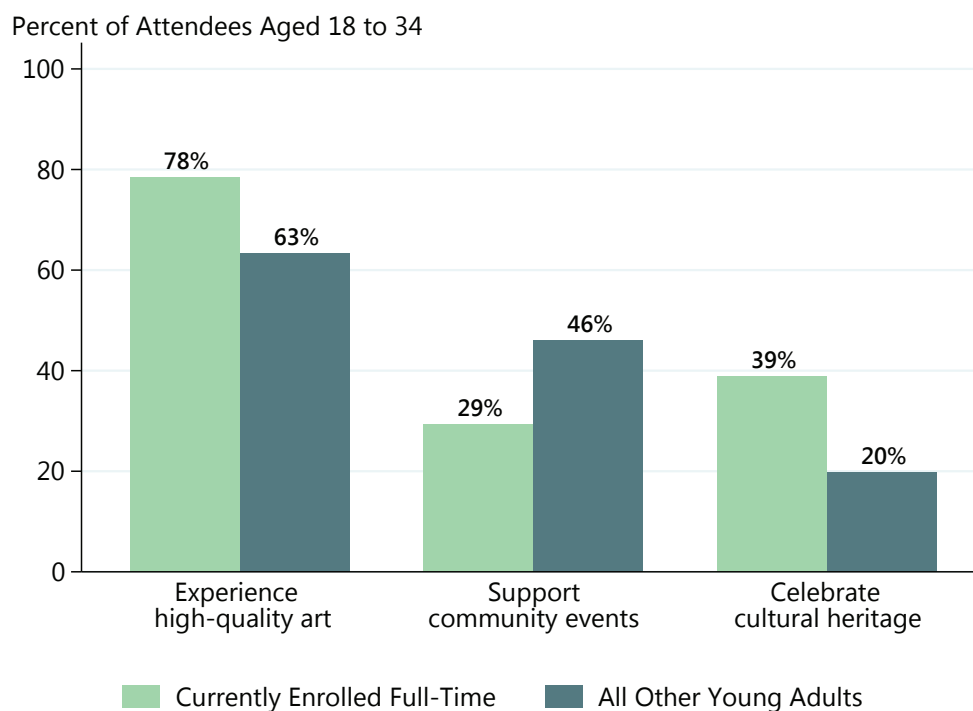
attended arts events just slightly more than did their female counterparts (Montgomery & Robinson, 2010).

The specific behaviors observed in the 2012 GSS for married couples' co-attendance recall findings from two decades ago, based on an analysis of the 1992 SPPA. That earlier study found that married men's attendance at dance, musical and non-musical theater, and classical music performances were more significantly and reliably predicted by their female spouses' childhood exposure to formal arts education, regardless of whether men co-attended with their spouses. Female spouses' educational attainment was even more significant than their childhood arts exposure, as married women with higher educational attainment significantly increased their male spouse's arts attendance (Upright, 2004).

Similarly, the earlier study showed that married women were more likely to visit art museums with their husbands if the husband had had early exposure to the arts, and married women were also more likely overall to attend the arts with their husbands if the husband's educational attainment was higher. However, male spouses having higher levels of education had no measurable influence on women attending the arts on their own (Upright, 2004).

25 Note: see also Peterson, Hull, and Kern (2000), Lewis and Seaman (2004), and Book and Globerman (1997)

Figure IV-2. Percentage of U.S. Adults Aged 18 to 34 Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Motivations for Their Most Recent Event Attended, and by Higher-Education Enrollment Status (2012)



Families with Children

In addition to providing opportunities for spouses and partners to socialize and reconnect, arts attendance can provide parents with opportunities to spend time with their children outside the home. Controlling for gender, marital status, educational attainment, and income, we find that adults aged 18 to 34 in households with children under age six attended the arts at a 13 percent lower rate than did young adults from households without young children. In addition, nearly 20 percent of adults with children under age six were interested in attending performances or exhibits, but faced barriers, the most commonly mentioned being lack of time. For that matter, nearly 60 percent of adults with children under age six (and no older children at home) said an inability to find time, including due to work, was the most important reason for not attending an arts event of interest to them.

When parents of young children do attend the arts with a child, they are more likely to attend art exhibits than performances. It seems reasonable to conjecture that in many cases art exhibits may be more convenient to families with young children, offering a wider range of daytime hours, self-determined duration, and the ability to move around or leave without disrupting other visitors.

Overall, the main difference we observe among young adults with children under age six versus their same-age peers without young children is that they are significantly less likely to mention visiting a specific location as a draw in their arts attendance. However, when looking at reasons for attendance

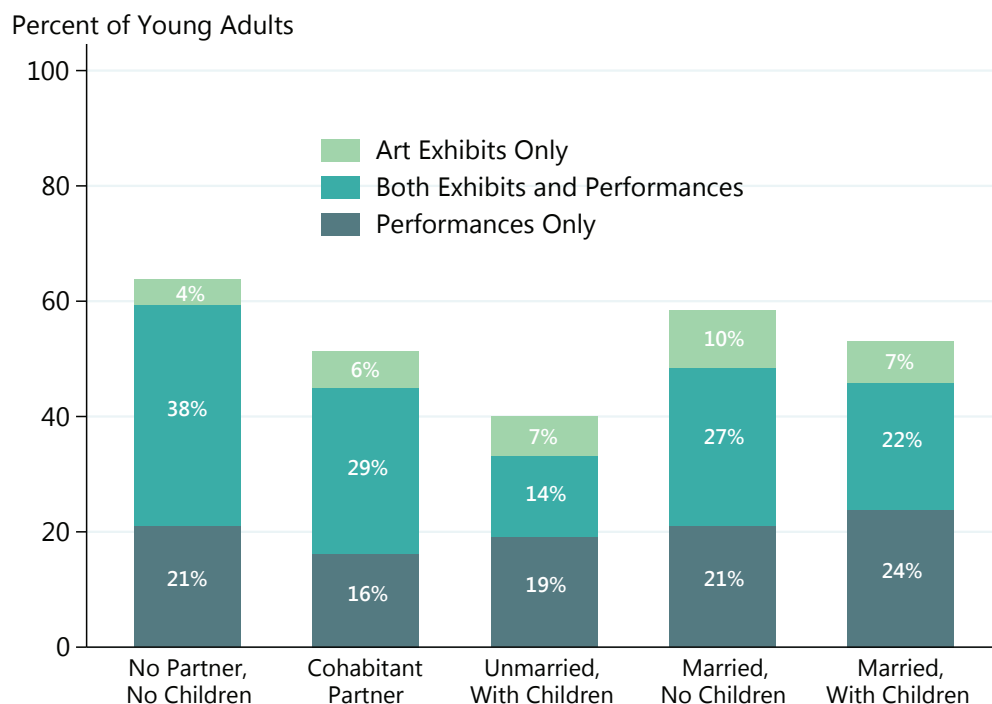
among parents of young children, it is important also to consider how motivations may differ depending on whether these parents are attending with or without their children.

When parents of young children attend with their child(ren), they are much more likely to cite, as major reasons for attending, the ability to socialize with friends and family, the desire to learn, the celebration of cultural heritage, or the low cost of attending the event. Yet, as Figure IV-5 illustrates, when parents of young children attend performances *without* their children, the desires to learn and to celebrate cultural heritage are rarely mentioned.

Parental Education Level and Family Attendance of the Arts

Recent studies have shown parents with bachelor's or higher degrees are more likely to ensure access to formal arts education, to take their children to arts events, and to encourage their children's participation in arts activities (Oskala et al., 2009; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). These patterns suggest that parents with higher levels of education might be more likely to attend the arts with their children; however, findings from the 2012 GSS (though related only to the most recent event attended) seem at odds with these earlier results.

Figure IV-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults Aged 18 to 34 Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, by Household Structure and by Event/s (2012)



Parents whose highest educational attainment is a bachelor's degree and who have children under age six have 22 percent lower probability²⁶ of attending the arts with their children, compared with their less- and more-educated peers. With whom are these parents attending instead? Although overall the probability of attending with one's spouse or partner does not significantly differ by educational attainment, more- and less-educated parents are significantly more likely to attend with both their spouse or partner *and* their children. In contrast, parents with only a bachelor's degree appear more likely to attend arts with their spouse or partner, but without their children.

Although respondents with less than a bachelor's degree are significantly *less* likely to attend art exhibits and performances overall, these differences in children's co-attendance by parental educational level are sufficiently stark to warrant further investigation. We therefore estimated a multivariate logistic regression to predict having attended the arts with a child, conditional on the respondent's being a parent and having one or more children under age six (and no older children) at home.

Controlling for respondent's age, gender, marital status, and household income, we find that the probability of young children's attending the arts with their parent may not significantly differ if the parent attending holds a bachelor's degree, versus less than a bachelor's degree. Put another way, even though parents of young children who hold bachelor's and higher degrees have four times higher odds (30 percentage points higher probability) of having attended the arts in the past year, parents with bachelor's (but not higher) degrees rarely attend the arts with their children—so rarely, in fact, that the probability of these parents attending the arts *with their child* is not significantly different from that of less-educated parents.

Finally, consistent with our earlier findings on the role of educational attainment in motivating arts attendance, here we again find that less-educated respondents—in this case, just among parents with children under age six—are significantly more likely to cite low cost or free admission among reasons for arts attendance. About 63 percent of parents with less than a bachelor's degree mentioned this motivation, versus only 37.5 percent of parents with bachelor's and higher degrees.

Also, parents who have only bachelor's degrees may be less likely than parents with either higher or lower educational attainment to attend the arts as a means of learning about their family and cultural heritage. Only 4.9 percent of parents of young children with a bachelor's (but no higher) degree mentioned this reason for arts attendance. This finding is consistent with the relatively low rate with which only-bachelor's degree-holders who have young children choose to attend with them. It is also consistent

with the generally low rates with which parents of young children cite celebration of cultural heritage as a motivation for attendance when their children do not co-attend. Parents of young children are also significantly more likely to cite wanting to learn new things as a major reason for arts attendance, provided that they hold either less than a bachelor's degree or hold a graduate degree. Only 12 percent of parents holding only bachelor's degrees said learning was a major motivation for attendance, versus 47 percent of those with less than a bachelor's degree, and 24 percent of those with graduate degrees.

Parents of School-Aged and Teenage Children

As children grow older and enter school, family attendance patterns shift again. Parents with school-age and teenage children are not significantly less likely than adults without children at home to attend the arts. Parents of preteen children, aged 6 to 12, are equally likely to attend exhibits versus performances, compared with respondents in households with no children, and their reasons for attending do not significantly differ by parental education level.

Compared with parents of younger children, parents of teenagers are significantly more likely to attend the arts with children out of a desire to see high-quality art (70 percent versus 55 percent of parents with younger children). Among parents of teenagers who attended the arts with a child, about four in five exhibit attendees, and two in three performance attendees, cited this reason for their attendance. Similarly, over half (55 percent) of parents of teenagers who attended the arts with a child, versus 37 percent of parents with younger children, said they attended to see a specific performer or artist.

Parents with young children were significantly more likely to have taken a child to a dance or theater performance, versus a live concert. However, we find almost no significant differences in child co-attendance rates by art form among parents with older children, with one exception. Teenagers' parents who attended a dance performance were almost twice as likely (63 percent versus 37 percent) to attend with a child, compared with parents of teenagers attending music or theater.

²⁶ Results obtained from multivariate logistic regression, with controls for respondent's age, gender, marital status, household income, and event type.

The Arts as We Age

Empty-nesters²⁷ are middle-aged and older people in the labor force whose children are no longer living at home. Empty-nesters are more likely than other arts attendees to cite celebrating cultural heritage as a major motivation for their arts attendance.²⁸

In this population, attendance at art exhibits is more frequently motivated by wanting to visit a particular venue or location, with half (50 percent) naming the location a major reason for attendance, compared with only 37 percent of exhibit-goers at other life stages.

When attending performances, empty-nesters are significantly more likely than other performance attendees to attend in support of community organizations or events, with 30 percent naming this as a major reason versus 26 percent of other performing arts attendees. Socializing with friends and family is also more often a major reason for their attendance (58 percent versus 50 percent for other performance-goers).

Retirees²⁹, like empty-nesters, are significantly more likely than other adult attendees to mention experiencing high-quality art among major motivations for arts attendance. Compared with other adult performance attendees, retirees were especially more likely to say experiencing high quality art was a major reason for attendance (44 percent versus 32 percent). Unlike empty-nesters, retirees were not significantly motivated to attend exhibits for that reason.

Retirees also differ from empty-nesters (but not from other adults) in that they are no more likely than other attendees to mention celebrating cultural heritage or supporting community among their reasons for attending. And, although wanting to learn is more frequently mentioned by retired exhibit attendees (92 percent versus 87 percent of other exhibit-goers), this is no more frequently a major reason for retirees than for other adult attendees of exhibits (about 60 percent for both groups).

In contrast with other arts attendees, retirees were less likely to indicate that socializing with friends or family is a major motivation for attendance generally (50 percent, versus 40 percent among other adult attendees). Regarding art exhibits in particular, only 35 percent of retired attendees mentioned socializing as a major reason for attending, versus 46 percent of other exhibit-goers. Similarly, for live performances only 45 percent of retired attendees, versus 53 percent of other performance-goers, named socializing as a major reason for attending.

Finally, retirees who attended art exhibits were also less likely than other attendees of exhibits to say their going was motivated by low cost or free admission (29 percent versus 45 percent). Meanwhile, retirees who attended performances were less likely to have mentioned the venue as a draw (54 percent versus 63 percent).

The most commonly mentioned barriers to arts attendance also shift as people transition into empty-nesting and retirement. Among interested non-attendees aged 18-54, cost and lack of time are the greatest barriers to attendance. But for individuals 55 and older, and for retirees in particular, the greatest barrier to attendance is the difficulty of accessing the location. Some 35 percent of retirees mentioned this as their most important barrier. In addition, the difficulty of finding someone to go with becomes an increasingly common concern as interested non-attendees age, particularly among retirees who want to attend a performance.

Compared with other adults who are married or living as married³⁰ with a “steady” cohabitant partner, retirees are substantially more likely to attend both exhibits and performances in the company of *only* their spouses or partners. Overall, 41 percent of retired attendees who have a cohabitant spouse/partner, compared with just 33 percent of non-retired attendees who have a cohabitant spouse/partner, went to exhibits and performances with only their spouses or partners.

²⁷ We define empty-nesters as adults aged 45 and older who previously had one or more children living in their household, but who as of 2012 no longer have children residing at home. In contrast with retirees, these individuals reported their work status in 2012 as employed full-time, employed part-time, or temporarily unemployed / laid off. About 19 percent of the 2012 GSS sample are in this group.

²⁸ Multivariate logistic regression result controls for race/ethnicity and immigration status, gender, marital status, presence of young children in the home, highest educational attainment, current higher education enrollment, household income, and urbanicity.

²⁹ Retirees in this sample include as all individuals who explicitly responded as of 2012 that their working status is “retired,” and who report having ever worked for at least one year. About 16.5 percent of the 2012 GSS sample are in this group.

³⁰ The 2012 GSS survey instrument includes questions both on legal marital status, and also on the respondent’s relationship and cohabitation status. For the latter question, respondents are asked to select one of several options, including “I have a steady partner, and we live in the same household,” or, in another version of the instrument, “I am living as married and my partner and I together live in the same household.”

Figure IV-4. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months and Who Have Children Under Age 6, by Most Recent Events, by “Major” Motivations for Attending, and by Whether a Child Accompanied Them (2012)

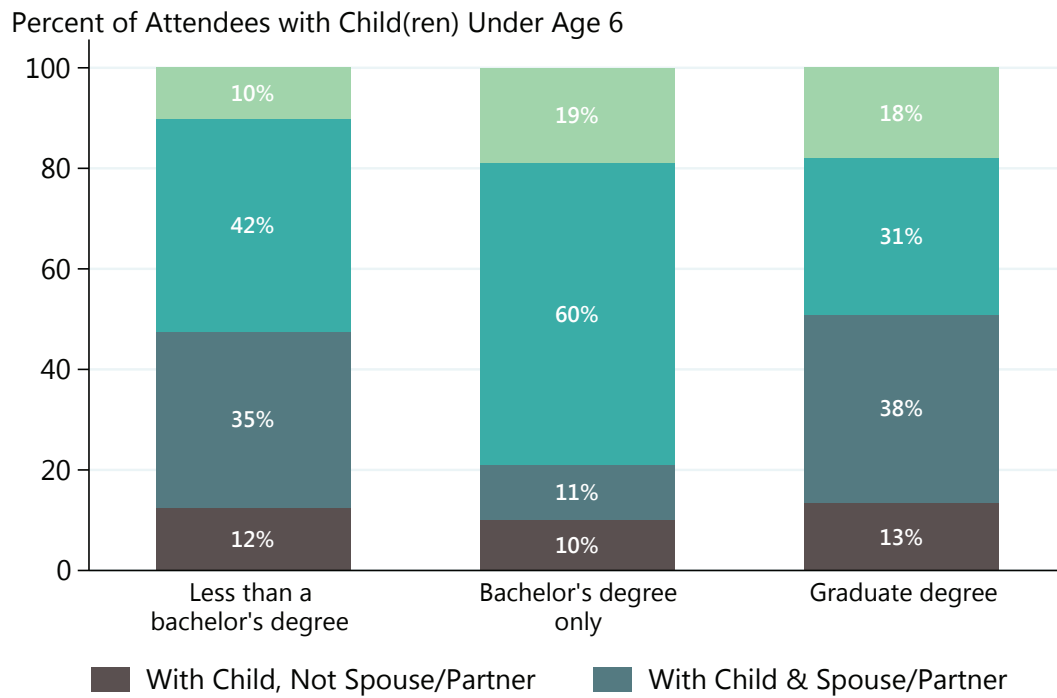
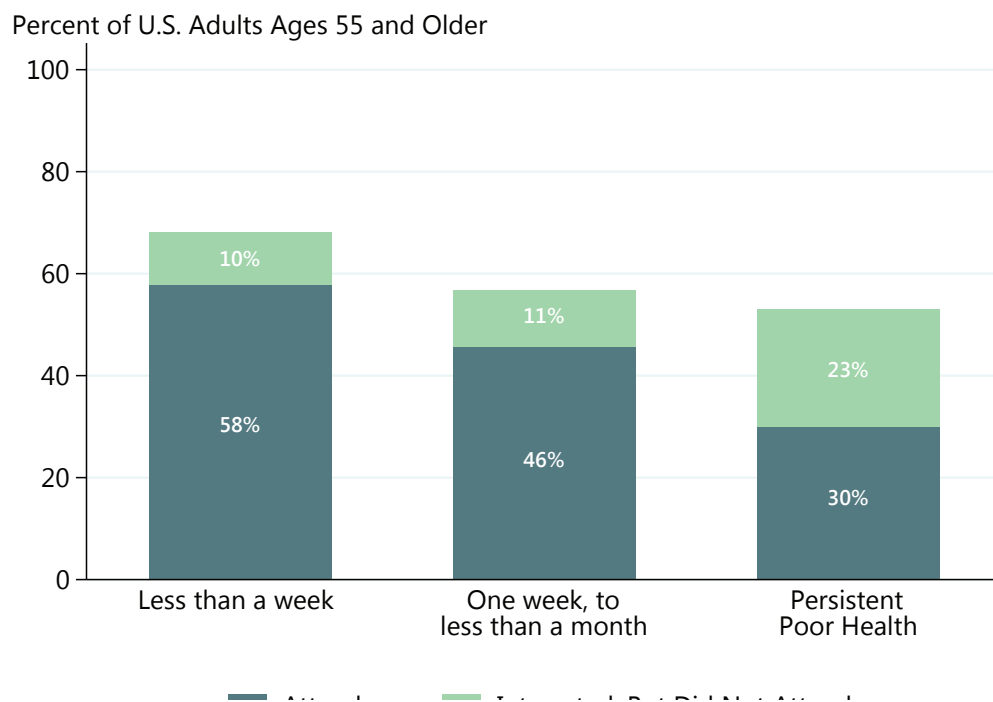


Figure IV-5. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months and Who Have Children Under Age 6, by Family Co-Attendance at the Most Recent Event, and by Highest Educational Attainment (2012)



Declining Health and Social Isolation

Physical health and well-being are also significant determinants of arts attendance. As Figure IV-7 demonstrates, among U.S. adults aged 55 and older who reported spending less than a week of the past month in poor physical health, 58 percent attended at least one art exhibit or performance within the past year. In contrast, only 46 percent of individuals who spent a week or more in poor health, and only 30 percent of those who spent the entire previous month in poor health, attended any arts events during the previous year.

Not surprisingly, given declining rates of attendance among those in poor health, adults who were more often in this condition or who identified as disabled were significantly more likely than healthier individuals without disabilities to have been interested in attending an exhibit or performance without following through.

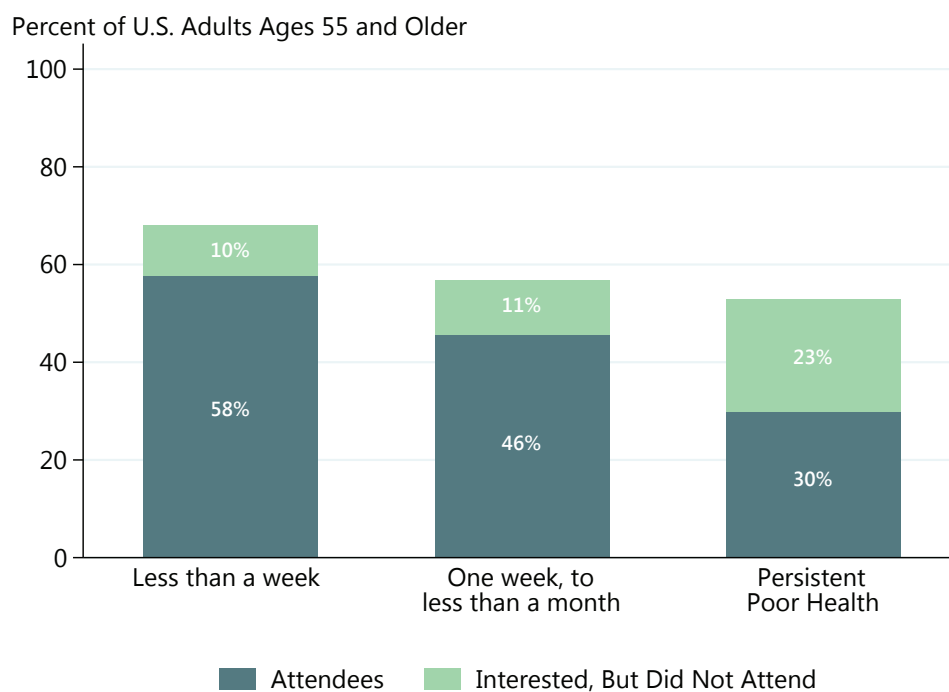
Poor physical health appears to have an impact on arts attendance primarily for individuals 45 and older, with adults aged 65 and older among the most affected. Over half (51.5 percent) of adults who reported being in poor physical health, overall, were 55 or older, even though these individuals comprise less than 37 percent of the sample. Among individuals in poor health, the most common barrier to attendance was difficulty getting to the venue (52 percent), and over one-third (36 percent) said access was their most important barrier. Similarly, difficulty getting to the location was a noteworthy barrier among

disabled individuals of any age who wanted to attend exhibits.

In addition, among interested non-attendees aged 55 and older who spent less than a week of the past month in poor physical health, only 12.1 percent said their greatest barrier to attendance was finding someone to go with. But among those in persistent poor health, about 30 percent said not having anyone to go with was their most important barrier. Roughly 30 percent of retirees overall, and 38 percent of retirees reporting persistent poor health, also live alone.

Consistent with the notion that social isolation is a barrier for many older Americans' arts attendance, 36 percent of these particular retirees—those living alone, in poor health—said they would have been interested in attending the arts, but were unable to attend.

Figure IV-6. Percentage of U.S. Adults Aged 55 and Older Who Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months, or Who Expressed Interest in But Did Not Attend, by Frequency of Poor Physical Health (2012)



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Chapter V. Personal Values and Arts Attendance

Many quantitative studies of arts attendance have focused on differences in rates of arts attendance across standard demographic characteristics, such as age, race and/or ethnicity, educational attainment, and income. These statistics are particularly important for examining questions related to equity, social justice, and potential disparities in access (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1992). However, prior research has also shown that observed differences in adults' attendance rates are often not due to fundamental differences arising from the demographic factors themselves. Rather, differences in attendance are often due to other socio-cultural factors, which may be incidentally correlated (but not caused by) immutable demographic categories.

Over three decades ago, published studies concluded that matters of "lifestyle, attitudes, and developmental experiences [were] both more conceptually useful variables with which to understand consumer behavior regarding the performing arts, and more empirically predictive than socioeconomic variables." (Andreasen & Belk, 1980). Personal values, as expressed in other activities, stated interests, and opinions have also been found to have greater predictive value than demographic variables, specifically for explaining arts attendance (Kotler & Scheff, 1997)

Despite this prior literature, to date relatively little attention has been paid to how the values and attitudes of arts attendees might differ from those of non-attendees. This knowledge deficit has occurred partly due to the lack of relevant variables in recent waves of the NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. For arts organizations seeking to reverse declines in attendance, therefore, the GSS data provides a unique perspective for understanding and relating to the "missing audience" of interested non-attendees, and also for retaining current attendees through better knowledge of their values, motivations, and concerns.

Key Findings

- Arts attendees placed greater value than non-attendees on listening to others' opinions and understanding diverse perspectives
- Attendees who valued devotion and loyalty as important were more likely to attend performances to socialize with their family members or friends, compared with those attendees who placed less importance on these qualities
- Republicans and Democrats are equally likely to have attended the arts within the past year
- Interested non-attendees tend to have stronger interest in safety, crime reduction, and public welfare programs, and are more likely to be independent voters
- Attendees and interested non-attendees both tend to have strong interest in public education and funding scientific research for its benefits to future generations

Personal Value Statements

Attending the arts with friends and family, and doing so within the structures of one's chosen communities, provides a sense of comfort and reassurance. This impression of personal security that arises from belonging to a community or being "embedded" in one's social network can help to lessen the perceived risks of trying out new activities, whether exploring a new art form, attending a new type of event, or traveling to a new venue.

At the same time, to create a sense of "belonging" to a community or a social network, people seek those who share their interests, values, or experiences (Sander & Putnam, 2010). The ways in which individuals perceive themselves and the values they hold can, as much as any innate demographic factor, influence the communities with which they choose to associate. Understanding the self-perceptions of adults who do attend the arts, and of those who are interested in the arts but experience barriers that inhibit their attendance, can thus provide critical insights.

The 2012 GSS includes a series of broad-ranging value-statements that assess the extent to which people agree with the importance of taking risks, listening to opinions different from one's own, and preserving family and religious traditions, among other items. As suggested in earlier literature, personal values can help explain more about the rates of arts attendance than can socio-demographic variables alone.

After controlling for the influence of socio-demographic differences,³¹ some personal values appear to predict higher chances of attending, while others predict lower chances of attending. Figure V-1 shows the frequency of these values among recent attendees, interested non-attendees, and other non-attendees. The probability of attending the arts is significantly higher among those who:

- say it is important to be loyal to their friends, and to devote themselves to people close to them;
- say it is important to listen to people who are different from them, and that even when the respondent disagrees, he or she wants to understand the other person's perspective;
- enjoy variety and trying new and different things;
- value being creative and doing things in their own original way; and
- look for adventures and like to take risks, wanting to have an exciting life.

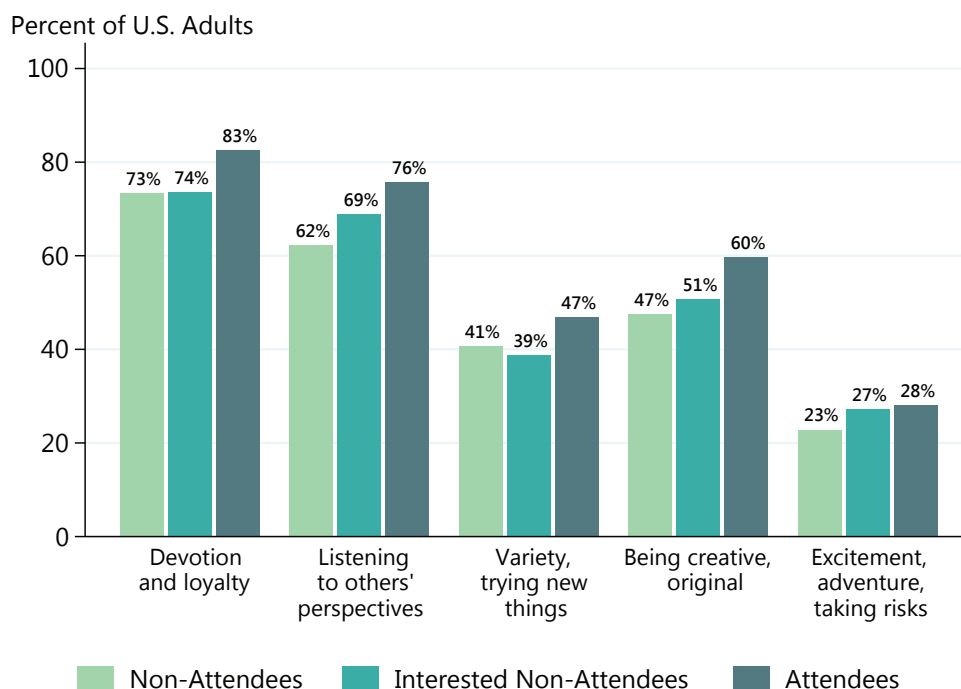
31 The personal value statements highlighted here remained statistically significant predictors of arts attendance in multivariate logistic regression models controlling for the respondent's age, gender, marital status, presence of children in the home, highest educational attainment and whether the individual was currently enrolled in school full-time, household income, whether the individual had retired from the workforce, political party affiliation, immigrant status, and self-identified social class.

Devotion and loyalty to people close to them is a particularly significant predictor of arts attendance among both men and women. After controlling for other socio-demographic differences (see footnote on prior page)—including gender differences in the distribution of responses to each value statement—we find the probability of attending the arts is 12 percentage points higher among individuals who share this value, all else equal, with no difference for men versus women. Likewise, the probability of attending arts is 8.7 percentage points higher among those who value variety and trying many new and different things, and 7.8 percentage points higher among those who feel it is important to listen to others with differing opinions and understand their perspectives, all else equal.

Men and women who value being creative and doing things in their own original way are 8.6 percentage points more likely to attend the arts, but this value is especially predictive of arts attendance among men. Men who attend the arts have 15 percentage points higher probability of saying they value creativity and originality, as compared with uninterested non-attendees who share similar sociodemographic characteristics.

Individuals who look for adventure and excitement, and like taking risks, are also significantly more likely to attend the arts. But again, holding this value is more salient for men's attendance and interest in the arts than for women's. Men who share this value are 12-13 percent more likely both to express interest in attending and to follow through on attending the arts, compared with men of similar

Figure V-1. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with Value Statements Significant in Predicting Arts Attendance, by Whether They Attended or Were Interested in Attending the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months (2012)



socio-demographic backgrounds who do not share this value. By contrast, men who feel it is important to be humble, modest, and not draw attention to oneself, are 11 percentage points less likely to attend the arts—especially exhibits—all else equal, whereas those who value success and recognition for their achievements are 12 percentage points more likely to attend.

Compared with exhibit attendees, performance-goers more often said physical safety and security was important to them. And, among performance attendees, concert-goers and attendees of dance performances also appear somewhat different in the values they espouse. For example, concert-goers are significantly more likely than other performance attendees to say it is important to them to show their abilities, be admired, and achieve success and recognition. Male concert-goers also more often emphasize the importance of being free and independent.

By contrast, dance attendees were significantly less likely to say they valued success and recognition from others for their achievements, and theater-goers were significantly less likely to say it is important to them to command others' respect, compared (in each case) with other performance attendees with similar socio-demographic characteristics.

Instead, male and female performance attendees who emphasized having fun, and helping those around them—caring for their wellbeing—were more likely recently to have attended a dance performance. In our fully-specified model, including socio-demographic variables and value statements, we find that supporting community organizations and events is still significantly more common

as a major reason for dance than for music or theater attendance (see Chapter II).

In 1980, a study based on surveys in southern U.S. cities found that people who valued “traditionalism” were less likely to attend either the theater or the symphony, compared with adults who did not espouse such values (Andreasen & Belk, 1980). In this study, traditionalism was understood as an aversion to taking risks, and as the upholding of normative family and gender roles, “church-going, old-fashioned tastes, a feeling that things are moving too fast, and a wish for the good old days.”

The 2012 GSS similarly asks about the importance respondents place on observing family or religious traditions and customs; overall, we find no relationship between individuals’ valuing tradition and whether or not they attended the arts in the past year. Approximately 49 percent of arts-goers and non-attendees alike reported valuing tradition and following family or religious customs. Among performance attendees, however, valuing family and/or religious traditions or customs was in fact significantly more common among theater (60 percent) and dance attendees, versus among those attending live music performances.³² At the same time, theater attendees are more likely than other performing arts-goers to say they like variety, and trying new and different things.

32 Arts attendees who say tradition is important or very important to them are also significantly more likely to have attended arts to learn about or celebrate their own cultural heritage.

Changing Attitudes Over Time

Between 1993 and 1998, two years in which the GSS asked a set of the same questions, U.S. adults’ attitudes toward “excellence” in the arts seemed mixed. On the one hand, people seemed to become more open-minded and democratic about who could judge art; by 1998, a significantly smaller proportion of adults (42 percent) agreed with the statement, “Only a few people have the knowledge and ability to judge excellence in the arts.” Notably, those who had visited an art museum or gallery were significantly more likely to agree that only a few people could judge artistic excellence, whereas those with at least a college degree were significantly less likely to agree that only a few people could judge artistic excellence. On the other hand, nearly all U.S. adults agreed in 1993 that artistic excellence could be found in popular and folk arts, in addition to in fine art. At the same time, U.S. adults also seem to have increased appreciation for modern visual art over this period.

Self-Reported Statements	1993	1998
“Only a few people have the knowledge and ability to judge excellence in the arts.”	49%	42%
“Modern painting is just slapped on: a child could do it.”	41%	31%
“Artistic excellence can be found in popular and folk culture just as much as in the fine arts.”	95%	n/a

Positive associations between arts-going and valuing open-mindedness and/or being original and creative were also found two decades ago, in the 1993 GSS. A study using these earlier data found that adults who visited art museums were more likely to be open-minded and have positive attitudes toward people different from themselves.

This earlier data also found that individuals who attended art museums prioritized having friends who were cultured, creative, and intelligent (DiMaggio, 1996). In the 2012 GSS, we find that individuals who believe it is important to listen to others’ opinions and perspectives have 11 percentage points higher probability of having attended an art exhibit in the past year. Exhibit attendees were also less likely than performing arts attendees to say it is important to behave properly and avoid doing anything people might say is wrong, or to be modest and avoid attracting attention.

Political Party Affiliation

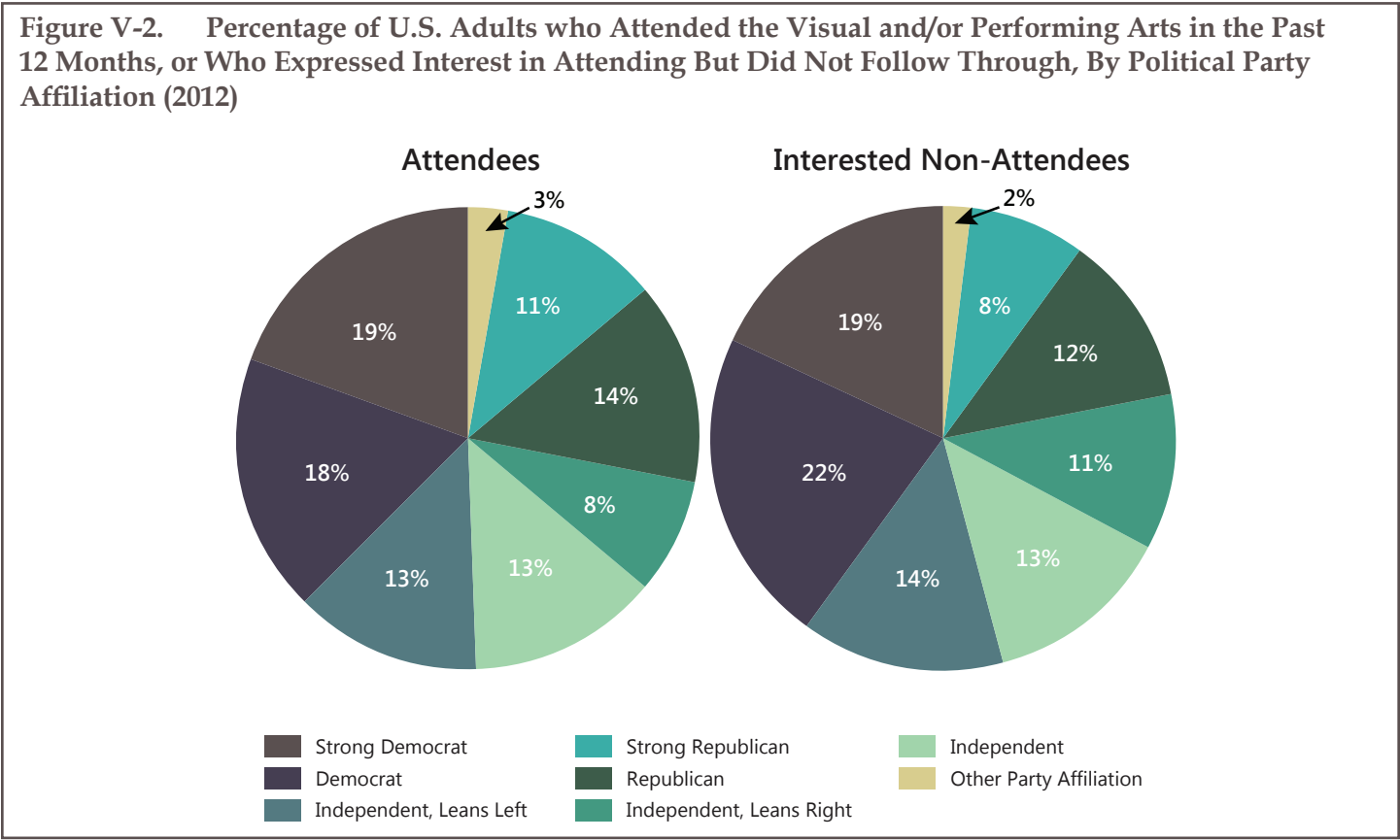
In addition to asking adults about personal value statements, the GSS also probes for sociopolitical attitudes through questions about political party affiliation, support for various domains of public expenditure, confidence in government agencies and processes, and more. To some extent, political party affiliation may summarize value sets that individuals already hold. However, a person’s choice to identify with one political party or another may in itself be meaningful, given decades of documented declines in

civic engagement (Sander & Putnam, 2010). For example, a 2013 Gallup poll reported that 31 percent of Americans identified as Democrats, 25 percent as Republicans, and a record 42 percent identified as independent.³³

Figure V-2 presents for comparison the distributions of individuals’ self-identified political party affiliations among current arts attendees versus interested non-attendees. Arts attendees span the political spectrum, with no statistically significant differences in the shares of Democrats and Republicans who reported having attended at least one art exhibit or performance in the previous year. Roughly 55 percent of Democrats, and 57 percent of Republicans, attended at least one art exhibit or performance.

Overall, individuals who reported identifying with either the Democratic or Republican party were significantly more likely to attend the arts than their independent peers. Among Americans who reported interest in attending the arts but who experienced barriers to their attendance, 40 percent identified as Democrats, 20 percent identified as Republicans, and 38 percent identified as Independent (see Figure V-2). It appears that individuals who identify more strongly with the Republican party are more likely to have followed through on any interest in attending the arts, with over 25 percent of arts attendees indicating Republican party affiliation versus just 20 percent of interested non-attendees.

33 See: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/166763/record-high-americans-identify-independents.aspx>, last accessed 17 September 2014.



In contrast, those who identified more weakly with the Democratic party, and left-leaning independent voters, were more likely to experience barriers to attendance. These individuals comprised 36 percent of interested non-attendees and 31 percent of current attendees. Finally, interested non-attendees were disproportionately independent or “swing” voters (38 percent, versus 34 percent of current attendees)

Public Expressions of Priorities, Values, and Needs

Personal values are also expressed through individuals’ priorities for the magnitude and distribution of government expenditures across different topical areas. Examining how these priorities differ among arts attendees, non-attendees with interest in attending, and uninterested non-attendees will prove instructive.

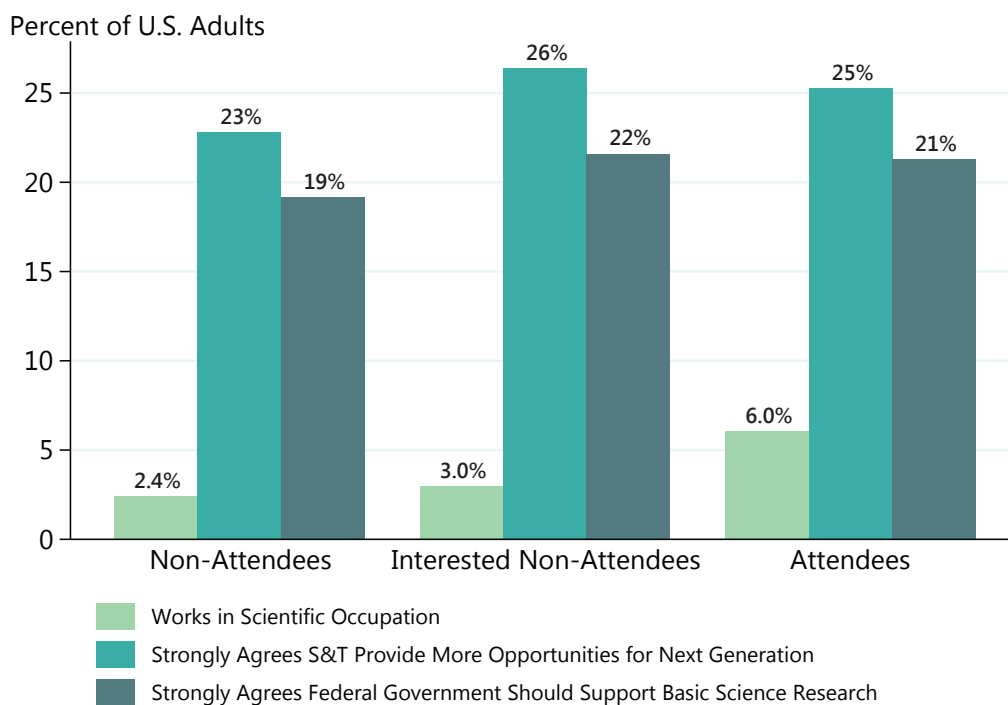
Figure V-3 presents the different domains of public expenditure valued by attendees, interested non-attendees, and non-interested non-attendees, with their margin of support for increased expenditures. The Y-axis in this graph is the share of U.S. citizens who support increasing federal government expenditures within a specific spending category, minus those who support a reduction in national expenditures.

Thus, if all U.S. citizen respondents expressed that funding should stay the same, or if equal numbers supported increasing versus decreasing expenditures in a given area, the margin of support would equal zero (represented by

the horizontal line labeled “Maintain Current Spending”). On the extreme ends, if all respondents favored increasing expenditures on a specific subject, the margin of support would equal 1 (represented by the horizontal line labeled “Increase Public Spending”), and if all respondents favored reducing expenditures, the margin of support would equal -1.

Interested non-attendees are significantly more likely than current arts attendees to support increasing public expenditures for law enforcement and crime reduction. To some extent, this reflects the negative correlation between support for increased public expenditures in this category, and both household income and highest educational attainment. However, this spending priority also tends to receive strong support from non-Hispanic Black or African-American and multiracial U.S. citizens, two racial/ethnic groups that are disproportionately represented among interested non-attendees.

Figure V-3. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Hold Scientific Occupations or Science-Related Values, by Whether They Attended the Visual and/or Performing Arts in the Past 12 Months or Expressed an Interest in Doing So (2012)



Interested non-attendees are also significantly more likely than either actual attendees or uninterested non-attendees to support increasing public expenditures on welfare and income assistance for the poor. Support for this priority significantly increases in inverse proportion to household income. Accordingly, arts attendees—who tend to have higher household incomes overall—are significantly less likely than interested non-attendees to support increased spending in the category.

Surprisingly, though, support for this spending priority is also a significant positive predictor of interest in arts attendance among *non*-attendees. In fact, even after controlling for a variety of factors (gender, race/ethnicity, age, household income, urbanicity, educational attainment, marital status, households with young children, and political party affiliation), we still find that interested non-attendees are significantly more likely to support increasing public expenditures to assist the poor.

Similar to current arts attendees but even more strongly, interested non-attendees support increasing public expenditures for education.³⁴ Interested non-attendees are also more likely than either current attendees or uninterested non-attendees to say it is “extremely important” for young people to complete formal schooling, and to express that they are very interested in local school issues, but nonetheless that they have little or no confidence in the nation’s schools and educational system. Interested non-attendees also more often say it is “very unfair” that families with higher incomes can afford better education for their kids.

GSS data reveal several additional areas of public expenditure where interested non-attendees’ views tend to be part-way between those of current attendees and non-attendees. One such area is expenditures on mass transit, bridges, highways, and roads. Adults who report barriers to access in arts attendance—that is, it was too difficult to get to the exhibit or performance they were interested in attending—are correspondingly more likely to support increased public expenditures on mass transit, highways, and roads. Some 62 percent of interested non-attendees who said they found it too difficult to get to the exhibit or performance venue also supported increased expenditures on transportation infrastructure, compared with fewer than half of other interested non-attendees.

Individuals who expressed this specific combination of barriers to access and a desire for greater investment in roads and highways were most commonly African Americans and Hispanics living in suburban communities around the largest U.S. cities, or residents of rural areas.

Special Focus: Interest in Science, Scientific Occupations, and Arts Attendance

As noted in the first chapter of this report, the National Science Foundation is a major funder of the General Social Survey. Because cultural policy-makers, funders, and practitioners have evinced growing interest in the connections between art and science (popularized by the slogan “STEM to STEAM”), this chapter considers how arts attendance is related to pro-science attitudes and scientific occupations.

According to the 2012 GSS results, arts attendees and interested non-attendees are both significantly more likely than uninterested non-attendees to support increasing public expenditures for scientific research, and over 43 percent indicate they are very interested in new scientific discoveries, compared with 30 percent of uninterested non-attendees of the arts.

In addition, arts attendees are significantly more likely to value basic scientific research, that is, to agree or strongly agree that, “Even if it brings no immediate benefits, scientific research that advances the frontiers of knowledge is necessary and should be supported by the federal government.”

Among adults in the U.S. workforce, arts attendees are significantly more likely than non-attendees to work in scientific occupations, even after controlling for educational and income levels. This finding is corroborated by a 2007 study finding that “engineering or technology” ranked third out of the top 12 occupations reported by adults attending arts events at 14 major university-based arts presenters (Brown, 2007). Among adults aged 25 and over who had completed high school but had no bachelor’s degree and were not currently enrolled in school, individuals working in scientific occupations had a 21 percent higher probability of attending the arts than their similarly educated peers.

For adults working in scientific occupations, arts attendance is less often influenced by a desire to socialize. Attendees who work in scientific occupations are significantly less likely to name socializing with family or friends as a major reason for attending, and they are also much less likely than other workers to say that not having someone to attend with prevented them from going. Instead, compared with other U.S. adult attendees, scientists more often name wanting to experience high-quality art as a major reason for exhibit attendance, and their attendance at performances is more often motivated by a desire to see a specific performer.

People working in scientific occupations who expressed an interest in attending the arts—but did not follow through—most often say that work commitments or lack of time prevented them from attending a performance: 65 percent of scientists named this barrier to attendance, versus 47 percent

³⁴ The difference between interested versus uninterested non-attendees is significant even in a fully-specified model like the one described in the previous paragraph.

of other adults in the workforce. In contrast, only four percent of workers in scientific occupations felt the location of an exhibit was too difficult to get to, versus 30 percent of other workers who were interested but did not attend the arts.

Workers in scientific occupations were relatively less likely than other workers to attend the arts alone, and they were significantly more likely to attend with their spouses or partners. In addition, people working in scientific occupations were less likely than other attendees to attend the arts with their friends. At the same time, those in scientific occupations who feel it is very important to help those around them and care for their well-being were overwhelmingly more likely also to attend the arts. Perhaps linked to this apparently greater family focus in their arts attendance, science workers were relatively less motivated to attend the arts out of support for their greater community.

Previous analysis using data from the 1993 GSS found that while art museum visitors and non-visitors did not differ significantly in their reported levels of confidence in major institutions (i.e., business, places of education, the executive branch of the government, Congress, the press, or television), arts attendees nonetheless were *more* likely to cite confidence in the scientific community than were adults who did not attend ($p \leq 0.001$) (DiMaggio, 1996). Consistent with these earlier findings, the 2012 GSS shows significant differences across arts attendees, interested non-attendees, and other non-attendees in their confidence in the scientific community, with high confidence reported at rates of 46 percent, 41 percent, and 36 percent, respectively, across these groups.

Finally, perhaps consistent with the significantly greater support we observe for increasing public expenditures in education among interested non-attendees, it appears that interested non-attendees are most likely to strongly value science and technology for the opportunity it gives future generations versus other (disinterested) non-attendees and current arts attendees.

Implications for Arts Practice

Our findings suggest a few strategies for arts organizations wishing to increase their attendance, based on the major audience segments we identify below, each at the nexus of observable demographics and less-observable values and motivations.

First, arts organizations and presenters seeking to build a more diverse audience base should recognize that wanting to learn and experience new things is a strong motivator for attendance, and that motivation is just as strong—if not stronger—among individuals with lower incomes and with no bachelor's or higher degree.

Especially when presenting unfamiliar or experimental works that many might perceive as outside their comfort zone, organizations might consider coupling low-cost or free admission with an explicit focus on making the event accessible to adults motivated by learning new things. However, these organizations should also be aware that—unlike the second audience segment we present below—individuals who are motivated to attend the arts primarily due to low-cost or free admission also tend to have more material focus than those who attend for other reasons, placing higher value on wealth and having expensive things, and lower value on modesty or humility.

Second, interested non-attendees are more likely than others to value public investments in education and schools, and they are more concerned with physical safety and reducing crime. Current attendees who share these same priorities are more frequently motivated to attend the arts in order to support community organizations and events.

Individuals who attend exhibits to support their communities tend to have lower household incomes, compared with other exhibit attendees, and individuals who attend performances for this reason tend to value modesty and humility more (and wealth or having expensive things less) than other performance attendees. Given these findings, local community-based arts organizations wishing to attract members of this missing audience might benefit from increasing their community engagement—for example, offering educational activities for adults and families—and also from considering partnerships with schools or other community organizations to provide a safe, welcoming, and accessible venue for arts participation.

The third and fourth audience segments we identify are both primarily motivated to attend the arts to socialize with friends and family. However, they have different demographic and household characteristics and they also tend to hold somewhat different sets of personal values. The third segment is dominated by people who strongly value devotion and loyalty to those close to them. Among performance attendees, these are often women, or married men with no young children at home, who attend the arts with their spouses or partners. Marketing strategies that encourage couples' attendance, recognizing that arts attendance is just one choice couples might make for time they spend together, would likely speak to these individuals.

By contrast, the people in the fourth segment are less likely to attend with a spouse or partner, and are more likely to attend with friends or other guests outside their immediate family. These individuals include unmarried women who attend art exhibits and who perceive themselves as creative and original, and performance attendees who prioritize adventure and risk-taking, and who value having wealth and expensive things. The barrier that interested non-attendees with similar demographics and values most often experience is lack of time, but cost is rarely an issue.

Many of the individuals in this fourth segment, like the empty-nesters discussed in Chapter III, also said that experiencing high-quality art was a major reason for their attendance. Those who attended for this reason tended to emphasize listening to others' opinions, even if different from their own. Exhibit-goers in this group were less concerned than other exhibit-goers with public education and placed less importance on devotion and loyalty to others. They were also more likely to be non-Hispanic Whites and first-generation immigrants residing in the largest U.S. cities.

Consistent perhaps with the risk-taking value noted above, those who attended performances to experience high-quality art were also significantly less concerned with physical safety and reducing crime. Individuals with bachelor's and higher degrees were significantly more likely than individuals with lower levels of educational attainment to attend performances for this reason.

Considering these findings, we believe that organizations providing opportunities for attendees to socialize, meet new people, and experience new art forms, in a flexible format that combines the arts with other activities these individuals enjoy, may be better able to attract and retain audience members from this group. For visual arts and live music performances, the top-donor gala events held in recent years at the Guggenheim and Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and similar events elsewhere that combine a cocktail party atmosphere with opportunities simultaneously to socialize and to enjoy the arts, might serve as an example.

Chapter VI. Conclusions

The documented decline in attendance at “benchmark” arts events over the last two decades is a continuing challenge for the nonprofit arts sector. The 2012 General Social Survey (GSS) provides nationally representative data that enable us to understand in greater depth why U.S. adults choose to attend (or not to attend) art exhibits and live performances. This report examined motivations for and barriers to arts attendance, taking advantage of the wide range of covariates available in the 2012 GSS: socio-demographic variables, life stages and family circumstances, and personal values.

By capturing data on interested non-attendees—individuals who expressed interest in attending at least one exhibit or performance within the past year, but who ultimately chose not to attend—the 2012 GSS provides unique insights into *who* is in the missing audience, and *why* they do not attend. Greater attention to the values, perceptions, and attitudes that actual attendees and interested non-attendees hold—and the effects of life stages and life cycle transitions on motivations and barriers to attendance—may help us construct better pathways to grow arts participation overall, making the presentations and performances both more relevant and more accessible to the public.

The GSS variables also provide insights and help us begin to better understand when disparities in attendance arise from differences in opportunities and not from differences in preferences or tastes for the arts.

It is important to reiterate that, historically, the types of events measured as “arts attendance” have been narrower than what is collected by the GSS. Much research and discussion within the nonprofit arts sector have been driven by reliance on the National Endowment for the Arts’ long-standing measures of attendance at “benchmark” arts events. Although this measure continues to prove useful for trend analysis, the NEA recently has seen fit to expand the survey so that other types of arts attendance are captured. Asking about arts attendance in a more inclusive way likely leads respondents to consider a wider range of events that they attend, or that they would be interested in attending. Thus, analyzing the 2012 GSS’ arts questions (based on revised SPPA questions of the same year) necessarily entails a broader set of arts activities than have figured in empirically rooted discussions about attendance.

Describing *who* attends the arts based solely on traditional demographic categories may be useful for policymakers concerned with equal access, but demographics alone provide little insight into why people do or do not attend the arts. This report instead integrates an understanding of the changing role that arts-going plays in the course of people’s lives, and the varied opportunities the arts may present for individuals to socialize and bond with

their families and broader communities—whether with communities of geography, communities of shared cultural heritage, or communities of common interests. This report also offers quantitatively based insights for arts stakeholders and organizations.

Many U.S. arts organizations that offer live performances or exhibits are grappling with the impact of shifting demographics and the nation’s rapidly changing participatory culture. Although the art itself is often the basis of arts organizations’ missions, it may not be the quintessential element driving their audiences’ decision to attend. At the same time, these perspectives need not be at odds. Instead, these observations should spur artists and arts organizations to consider how they might better satisfy arts attendees’ motivations for attending, and potentially relieve barriers for those who express an interest in attending but do not currently follow through.

Socializing is a strong motivation for attending live performances, regardless of one’s income level. Yet one’s life stage influences a person’s social networks, with whom one is likely to attend the arts, and the dynamics of socializing at the event itself. Because spending time with family and friends so often motivates individuals’ attendance, in the aggregate this may create an environment that precludes individuals from feeling comfortable attending alone.

About one in five interested non-attendees said they ultimately didn’t attend because they could not find anyone to accompany them. This concern was equally prevalent among those interested in attending exhibits and performances, although those interested in attending performances were more likely to name the lack of a companion their “most important” barrier. Our analyses found that not having someone to go with is particularly a barrier to arts attendance among non-Hispanic Blacks and African Americans, as well as among Mexican-Americans. This barrier to attendance also appears salient for seniors aged 65 and older, especially those who are retired and live alone.

The notion that co-attendance is more important—possibly even a deal-breaker—for *prospective* performance attendees is consistent with *actual* performance attendees’ significantly higher reported motivation to attend in order to socialize with family and friends. In addition, with so many arts attendees motivated to go primarily for a social experience—albeit one centered on art—arts organizations should consider how they can foster the types of relational experiences current and prospective attendees are seeking, and how they can use these linkages to build an audience that shares common interests and values.

For example, in some communities, this goal may best be realized by promoting opportunities for multiple generations to come together to celebrate their family's racial or ethnic heritage, and to preserve and share their traditions and customs. In other communities, an audience might instead be built around people's shared interest in experiencing and learning from a wide variety of new and different, high-quality arts presentations, with opportunities to discuss and socialize with others who have opinions different from one's own.

Budget and time constraints are real, but it is not clear whether removing these barriers would in fact increase arts attendance. With respect to cost, subsidizing arts organizations' costs to lower the price of admission may strongly influence the decisions of some, especially those with household incomes below the top quartile. However, our report finds that only one in four attendees at free events claimed low cost was a "major reason" for their attendance. More often, attendees at free events were motivated by a desire to support events or organizations in their communities, or by an intrinsic desire to learn new things, regardless of the importance of low cost itself in their decisions.

Although lack of time—as we discuss in the section below—is a difficult barrier to address, one time-use-related finding is particularly worth noting. Parents with children under age six at home are significantly less likely to attend arts overall, and they are especially less likely to visit art museums. The most common barrier cited by interested non-attendees in this group is lack of time; and yet, these same individuals were about four times more likely to have visited the zoo one or more times in the past year.

Perhaps recognizing these trends, some arts organizations have teamed up with zoos to make the arts more accessible to young families. Two examples of such efforts include Art on the Zoo Fence, a Hawaiian non-profit that organizes exhibitions of artworks next to the Honolulu Zoo, the Brandywine Zoo's Art in the Ark family program, which provides arts education classes (e.g., drawing, painting) with zoo animals as subjects, and the Zoo Music Concert Series at Albuquerque's BioPark, which presents live music performances outdoors at the zoo, with open seating so families can come and go if needed. Co-locating arts events with other family-friendly attractions and sites not only raises awareness and familiarity among non-attendees; it also effectively reduces the cost of attendance by reducing travel time.

Implications for Research

Although this report presents a great deal of descriptive evidence from the 2012 GSS, more still can be learned from these data. As noted, lack of time was the most commonly cited barrier to attendance among the 13.3 percent of U.S. adults who reported interest in attending an exhibit or performance, but who did not follow through. More research is needed to understand differences in arts attendees' and non-attendees' respective leisure time constraints, and individuals' priorities in how they choose to allocate their leisure time. Analyses of detailed time-use survey data may also provide greater insight into the opportunity cost that arts attendees incur, as well as offer suggestions for how arts organizations can effectively collaborate with other groups to help interested non-attendees find the time for arts attendance.

In addition, though some of the descriptive variables we generated for this report leveraged findings from earlier waves of the GSS, our analyses did not explicitly take advantage of the survey's rolling panel design. Future research could examine not only the effect on arts attendance of particular life stages as we have done here, but also the impact of transitions that occurred during the panel—for example, considering individuals who transitioned from full-time work in 2008 to retirement in 2012.

The 2012 GSS arts module provides important, nationally representative data assessing motivations and barriers to arts attendance, in the context of a larger survey of U.S. adults' attitudes, values, and perceptions. If similar data are collected in future GSS surveys, we would suggest the following potential improvements:

- Re-introduce questions about attitudes towards arts, as in the 1993 and 1998 GSS Arts and Culture modules, including support for public expenditure on arts, to be asked of both attendees and non-attendees;
- Capture information to shed light on possible perceptual barriers among those who did not attend, including among those who did not express interest in attending any specific event;
- Obtain more detailed information about the types of art individuals attended, so that we can better discern, for example, whether there exist differences in motivations among attendees of classical music versus popular music concerts; and
- Given the importance of location as a motivation for exhibit attendance, explicitly determine whether exhibit attendees are describing a visit to an art museum versus an exhibit in another type of venue.

Implications for Policy

Prior research on arts attendance has determined that, on average, higher incomes and higher levels of educational attainment positively predict arts attendance. But for arts and cultural policymakers, addressing such systemic issues as disparities in education and income is a daunting task. Our analyses of the 2012 GSS identified these same descriptive trends, but also examined a broader range of related factors that may assist policymakers and arts organizations seeking to provide opportunities for greater participation in arts attendance from a more diverse audience base.

By looking at how income and education correlate with the values, perceptions, and behaviors with which individuals create their sense of identity, we can better understand how these preferences affect individuals' arts attendance, and offer touch-points or levers for change.

One key finding from Chapter III was that much of the apparent education-related gap in attendance is due not to lack of interest among less-educated individuals, but rather to the barriers to attendance that they experience or perceive. Furthermore, while people at lower-income levels are less likely to attend performing arts events, they are just as likely as those at higher-income levels to attend art exhibits, which more often offer free admission.

When these people do attend the arts, they attend more often to support their communities, to celebrate their cultural heritage, and because they want to gain knowledge and learn new things. But for some—and especially for racial and ethnic minorities—not having anyone to go with and difficulty in getting to the venue are more significant barriers than the price of admission. Focusing on addressing these motivations and barriers to attendance, rather than on systemic gaps in educational attainment or income, may help change perceptions and behavior around arts attendance.

Overall, available data on arts participation among U.S. adults has documented a decline in arts attendance. As the nonprofit arts sector works to adapt to demographic shifts in the population and the changing cultural landscape, the field will need to go beyond observations about behavior into the reasons driving that behavior—*why* people do or do not attend, or why they aren't even interested. The answers to these questions will provide vital information for helping the nonprofit arts sector adapt and change to meet new audience interests, tastes, and preferences.

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