



# Arts Participation Patterns in 2022

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Highlights from the Survey of Public  
Participation in the Arts

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Participation in the Arts

# CREDITS

October 2023

**National Endowment for the Arts**

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Cover image: A masked audience watches a performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, Nebraska in 2020. Photo courtesy of the Lied Center for Performing Arts at University of Nebraska.

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# PREFACE

In the spring and summer of 2020, cultural funders and practitioners were forced to conjecture about the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic—whose end was still hidden from view—would affect later patterns of participation in the arts.

Even back then, one or two industry surveys attested to persistent public demand for diverse arts and cultural opportunities. Media reports flagged impromptu choruses on balconies, digital tours of galleries, online theater events, book chats via webinar, renewed interest in cooking and craft activities, and anecdotes about self-taught proficiency with a musical instrument.

The present report, however, is the first look through the lens of federal survey data at how adults participated in arts activities for one year of the pandemic: a 12-month period ending in July 2022, when the survey was fielded.

Let's consider this reference year more closely. While COVID-19 continued to take its toll, vaccination was well under way. Many arts organizations and venues had found safe and innovative ways to engage with their audiences, and sometimes to redefine them. Meanwhile, at the household level, U.S. adults were showing that their desire for informal arts experiences and for art making itself could not be easily suppressed.

This statement is supported by key findings from the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. In 2022, the percentage of adults who created and/or performed art exceeded—albeit slightly—the share who attended in-person arts events. That year, more than half of the nation's adults did some form of art making.

Here it is useful to note that the NEA survey questionnaire—which, since 1982, has been administered roughly every five years by the U.S. Census Bureau—has been evolving with the times, ever struggling to assimilate new art forms and activities when they come into existence. The 2022 survey, for example, included an item about creative coding and design for software or games, a question that was not asked in prior survey years.

Because of the rapid emergence of new ways to participate in the arts, and because of subsequent revisions to the survey in an effort to accommodate such activities, it is difficult to make reliable comparisons, across survey years, of the percentages of adults who personally created and/or performed art. Still, this report shows trend data for personal art-making activities in cases where the question-items have remained unchanged.

One section of the 2022 survey that poses few challenges to long-term trend analysis is a module about attendance at specific kinds of arts events. Here the news is that, while attendance rates fell since 2017 (the prior survey period) for virtually every type of arts activity named, attendance rates *grew* for other music, dance, and theater activities not listed among the specific types included in the survey.

What were those other performing art types? They may have included any number of genres and activities for which survey questions were absent: rock or pop, rap or hip-hop, folk or country, or music from other countries and cultural traditions, in addition to comedy/improv, circus acts, or magic shows. In 2022, 21 percent of adults attended these “other” kinds of music, dance, and theater events—up from 15 percent five years earlier.



This survey finding suggests a promising line of inquiry for future research about arts participation in the U.S. Ideally, one would want to know—despite limited space on the NEA questionnaire, and risks of disrupting historical trend data—what percentages of adults engage with all the individual art forms currently excluded from the survey’s attendance module. For future waves of the NEA survey, more qualitative research will be needed to draft and refine such question-items.

At the same time, one should gravely view the overall declines in visual and performing arts attendance, based on the activity types that *are* listed in the survey. Those activities include art museum or gallery visits, and attendance at jazz, classical, or Latin/salsa music performances, musical and non-musical plays, craft fairs and outdoor performing arts festivals, opera, and ballet and other dance forms. Ramifications of those declines were still being felt in the summer of 2023, when the closing of many regional theater organizations and shows began to make national news.

Another great disappointment from the 2022 survey results is further evidence of diminishing rates of fiction-reading, with only 38 percent reading in this genre, down four percentage points since 2017, and seven since 2012. It is sobering to reflect that our stretches of isolation and self-quarantining were unaccompanied by a boom in reading novels or short stories. For that matter, the reading of books in general also declined from five and ten years earlier: fewer than half of all adults read at least one book in 2022.

Digital or virtual consumption of art, on the other hand, can be said to have prospered. As in 2017, this mode of arts participation was easily the most popular among U.S. adults, though, even here, in 2022, many individual art forms saw declines in participation. All the same, heightened online access to arts education may account for the finding that most adults who experienced some type of learning in the arts were more likely to have done so outside formal classes or lessons.

These are a few observations from the 2022 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA). Accompanying tables show demographic differences in attendance rates for the types of arts events for which trend data exist, while a separate research brief, issued concurrently, examines the demographics of people who participated in virtual arts activities in 2022.

Although the SPPA is just a snapshot of arts behaviors in this country, it exposes gaps related both to equitable opportunities for participation and to public knowledge of the full array of art forms, genres, and traditions with which U.S. adults now engage. A comprehensive statistical report of the 2022 SPPA data will be released next year, and the process of revisiting the survey’s questions will also begin, in an attempt to better document and evaluate the resilience of this function in the lives of people and communities.

Office of Research & Analysis  
National Endowment for the Arts  
October 2023

# METHODS

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) was administered in July 2022 as a supplement to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), and therefore, is nationally representative. The 2022 SPPA included two core components and four modules designed to capture arts participation through electronic media, personal performance and creation of art, and participation in other cultural and civic activities, among other subjects. To permit analysis of arts attendance and voluntary reading trends across previous SPPA survey years, this document relies heavily on Core 1 of the survey questionnaire. Limited trend analysis is shown for Modules A, B, and C, based on cases where the individual question-items, and the order in which they appeared, remained constant across survey years.

When discussing trend data for Module B, this report includes data from the 2020 Arts Basic Survey, also conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau as part of the CPS. More information about this survey, which was fielded in February 2020, is available here: <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/arts-data-profile-series/adp-32>.

## **Topics and Components of the 2022 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts**

**Core 1:** Arts attendance and literary reading

**Core 2:** Arts attendance and venue types

**Module A:** Consuming art via electronic or digital media

**Module B:** Performing art, creating visual art, and writing

**Module C:** Other artistic, cultural, and civic activities

**Module D:** Arts education

The total sample size of the 2022 SPPA was 40,718 U.S. adults, aged 18 and over, of which 23.2 percent were represented by proxy respondents. The 2022 SPPA had a person response rate of 59.1 percent. Core 1 was administered to 6,578 respondents. Unless noted otherwise, in the tables that follow, all reported differences are statistically significant at 90 percent confidence.

# KEY FINDINGS

The 2022 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) is a large, nationally representative survey of U.S. adults' arts activities over the 12-month period ending in July 2022. Respondents were asked if they had done activities such as attending arts events, personally creating and/or performing art, reading books and/or literature, watching or listening to arts content via media, or learning an art form.

- 1. More than half (52 percent) of all adults created and/or performed art** in the 2022 survey period.<sup>1</sup> This is slightly larger than the share who attended an arts event that year (see *Figure 1*).<sup>2,3,4,5,6</sup>
  - The share of adults who made art is roughly equal to the share who read books and/or literature (53 percent).<sup>7</sup>
  - Just under half (48 percent) of all adults attended at least one arts event in person.
  - As in prior years, far and away the largest share of adults who participated in the arts did so through electronic or digital media (75 percent).

1 This figure is similar to the share of adults (54 percent) who, using a different set of measures, reported creating and/or performing art in 2017. See NEA, *U.S. Patterns of Arts Participation: A Full Report from the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, p. 11: <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/publications/us-patterns-arts-participation-full-report-2017-survey-public-participation-arts>.

2 The first bar in the figure includes the following activities: watching or listening to jazz music; watching or listening to Latin, Spanish, or salsa music; watching or listening to classical music or opera; watching or listening to other music; watching or listening to theater productions; watching or listening to dance performances; watching or listening to programs, podcasts, or other video or audio content about music, dance, or theater; watching or listening to programs, podcasts, or other video or audio content about the visual arts; watching or listening to programs, podcasts, or other video or audio content about books or writers; watching or listening to documentaries; looking at visual art; and learning about or interacting with an art exhibit or as part of a performance in a museum, theater, or concert hall.

3 The second bar in the figure includes the following types of reading: books in general (except books required for work or school), novels or short stories, poetry, or plays.

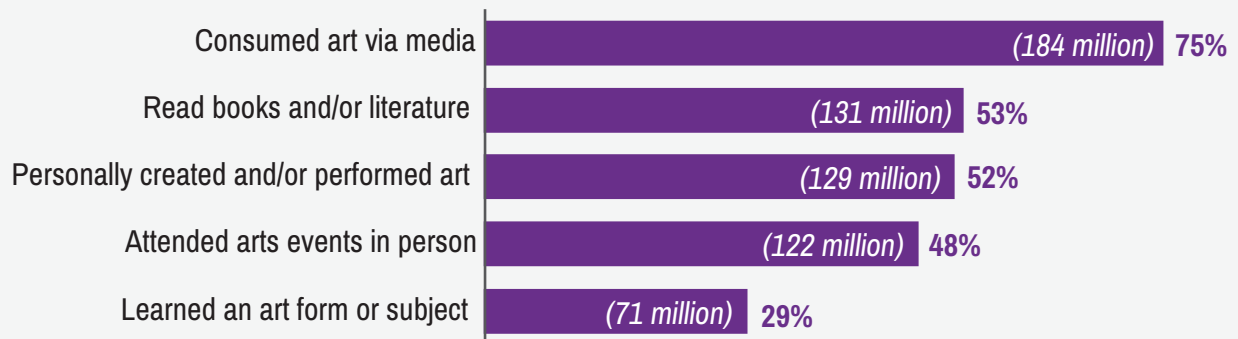
4 The third bar in the figure includes the following activities: pottery, ceramics, or jewelry-making; leatherwork, metalwork, or woodwork; weaving, crocheting, quilting, needlepoint, knitting, or sewing; singing; playing a musical instrument; acting; social dancing; performing or practicing dance; film or videos; photography; other visual art making, such as painting, sculpture, graphic design, or digital art; creative writing; designing, coding, or creating any games, software, or tools for computers, mobile devices, or other platforms; and creating any performance or work of visual art using a computer or mobile device.

5 The fourth bar in the figure includes the following activities: attending in-person jazz performances; Latin, Spanish, or salsa music performances; classical music performances; opera performances; musical stage plays; non-musical stage plays; ballet performances; other dance performances; other music, dance, or theater performances; visiting art museums or galleries; going to crafts fairs or visual arts festivals; attending outdoor performing arts festivals; and visiting or touring parks, monuments, buildings, or neighborhoods for historic, architectural, or design purposes.

6 The fifth bar includes the following types of arts-related learning: music; photography or filmmaking; other visual arts; acting or theater; dance; creative writing; art history or art or music appreciation; and creative coding or in computer animation or digital art.

7 By comparison, in 2017, just over 57 percent of adults read books and/or literature.

**Figure 1. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Did Various Arts Activities at Least Once in a 12-Month Period (2022)**



Source: National Endowment for the Arts, 2022 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), Core 1, Module A, Module B, and Module D.

**2. The overall rate of arts attendance dropped nearly six percentage points between 2017 and 2022.** Yet attendance rose for performing arts activities not specifically listed on the survey (see Figures 2-4).<sup>8</sup>

- Declines occurred for all categories of attendance except one: attending performing arts events of a type not listed on the survey. Participation in this category grew to 21 percent of adults.
- In 2022, roughly 26 percent of adults visited a site for historic or design purposes—just two points off the 2017 level.
- Regarding adults who attended a performing arts event “other” than a type listed on the survey, rate increases occurred for the following demographic subgroups: both men and women; non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics, and “other” racial or ethnic groups (e.g., Native Americans, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and two or more non-Hispanic races); adults from 25 to 54 years old; and adults who had attended at least some college, but had not completed graduate school.

**Figure 2. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended At Least One Arts Activity (2012, 2017, 2022)<sup>9</sup>**

			2017-2022	
2012	2017	2022	Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change
50.2%	53.8%	47.9%	-5.9 pp	-11%

<sup>8</sup> With the exception of the question-item about attendance at outdoor performing arts festivals, the questions about attending in-person performing arts events were preceded by the instruction that respondents should omit “performances by elementary, middle, or high school student groups.”

<sup>9</sup> Because of successive changes to SPPA question-items about the personal creation and performance of art, arts consumption via media, and arts-related learning (in 2012, 2017, and 2022), this table cannot be replicated for such activities.



## What Are Examples of “Other” Types of Performing Arts Attendance?

The Core 1 Module of the 2022 SPPA, from which these findings are taken, asked about attendance at the following types of performing arts events: jazz; Latin, Spanish, or salsa music; classical music; opera; musical theater; non-musical theater; ballet; other kinds of dance; and outdoor performing arts festivals.

To capture attendance at other types of performing arts events, however, survey officials also asked: “Did you go to any live music, dance, or theater performance—other than the kinds I’ve asked

about—during the last 12 months? This may include: rock, folk, or country music concerts; rap or hip-hop performances; comedy/improv, magic shows, or circus acts.” As reported above, 21 percent of adults responded affirmatively to this item.

Separately, Core 2 of the 2022 SPPA instrument found that 2.6 percent of adults attended a live book reading, storytelling, or poetry event. This figure compares with 6.0 percent of adults in 2017.

**Figure 3. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended Specific Types of Arts Activities (2017, 2022)**

	2017-2022			
	2017	2022	Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change
Jazz music	8.6%	6.3%	-2.3 pp	-27%
Latin, Spanish, or salsa music	5.9%	3.9%	-2.0 pp	-34%
Classical music performance	8.6%	4.6%	-4.0 pp	-47%
Opera	2.2%	0.7%	-1.5 pp	-68%
Musical stage play	16.5%	10.3%	-6.2 pp	-38%
Non-musical stage play	9.4%	4.5%	-4.9 pp	-52%
Ballet	3.1%	2.0%	-1.2 pp	-37%
Other dance	6.3%	3.3%	-3.0 pp	-48%
<b>Other performing arts</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>21.2%</b>	<b>+6.2 pp</b>	<b>+41%</b>
Art museum or gallery	23.7%	17.7%	-6.1 pp	-26%
Crafts fair or a visual arts festival	23.8%	17.1%	-6.7 pp	-28%
Outdoor performing arts festival	24.2%	18.7%	-5.5 pp	-23%
Park, building, monument, neighborhood visited for historic or design purposes	28.3%	26.0%	-2.3 pp	-8%
Movies <sup>10</sup>	58.6%	43.1%	-15.5 pp	-26%
Film festivals <sup>11</sup>	N/A	1.4%	N/A	N/A

10 In 2022, this item appeared in Core 2. In 2017, it appeared in Module D.

11 In 2022, this item appeared in Core 2.

**Figure 4. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended Performing Arts Events of a Type Not Listed on the Survey, by Demographic Subgroup (2017, 2022)**

	2017-2022			
	2017	2022	Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change
<b>Overall</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>21.2%</b>	<b>+6.2 pp</b>	<b>+41%</b>
Male	14.6%	20.5%	+5.9 pp	+40%
Female	15.3%	21.8%	+6.4 pp	+42%
Hispanic	8.0%	14.2%	+6.1 pp	+77%
Non-Hispanic White	17.3%	25.2%	+7.9 pp	+46%
Non-Hispanic Black	12.2%	15.6%	+3.5 pp <sup>n</sup>	+28% <sup>n</sup>
Non-Hispanic Asian	15.7%	10.2%	-5.5 pp <sup>n</sup>	-35% <sup>n</sup>
Non-Hispanic Other	11.5%	26.1%	+14.5 pp	+126%
Age 18-24	18.2%	23.5%	+5.2 pp <sup>n</sup>	+29% <sup>n</sup>
Age 25-34	18.0%	27.5%	+9.5 pp	+53%
Age 35-44	14.3%	25.8%	+11.5 pp	+80%
Age 45-54	16.3%	24.3%	+8.0 pp	+49%
Age 55-64	14.2%	17.8%	+3.7 pp <sup>n</sup>	+26% <sup>n</sup>
Age 65-74	12.2%	14.4%	+2.2 pp <sup>n</sup>	+18% <sup>n</sup>
Age 75+	7.7%	8.0%	+0.3 pp <sup>n</sup>	+4% <sup>n</sup>
Grade School	5.9%	3.0%	-2.9 pp <sup>n</sup>	-49% <sup>n</sup>
Some High School	4.8%	6.2%	+1.5 pp <sup>n</sup>	+31% <sup>n</sup>
High School Graduate	9.7%	13.6%	+3.9 pp	+41%
Some College	16.0%	22.3%	+6.4 pp	+40%
College Graduate	21.4%	31.8%	+10.5 pp	+49%
Graduate School	24.4%	29.6%	+5.3 pp <sup>n</sup>	+22% <sup>n</sup>

Note: <sup>n</sup> The reported difference is not statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

3. In 2022, open-air facilities (e.g., parks, pavilions, amphitheaters) were among the most popular sites of in-person arts attendance. In addition, social media and peer-to-peer communications appear the most effective means for generating enthusiasm about arts events (see Figures 5-6).

- More adults (17 percent) attended arts events at outdoor venues than in other settings listed on the survey. This was true of all demographic subgroups.
- Restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and coffee shops claimed the next largest share of arts attendees (10 percent), by selected venue type.
- More than 17 percent of adults reported having first learned through social media about an arts event they ultimately attended. Fifteen percent reported having learned of the event through friends, neighbors, or co-workers.

**Figure 5. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended Arts Events at Selected Venue Types, by Demographic Subgroup (2022)**

	College or University	Elementary/Middle/ High School	Church, Synagogue, or Other Place of Worship	Restaurant, Bar, Nightclub, Coffee Shop	Open-Air Facility (Park, Pavilion)	Community Center or Public Library
<b>Overall</b>	5.8%	4.4%	4.3%	10.3%	17.1%	4.9%
Male	4.8%	3.8%	3.5%	9.8%	16.2%	3.9%
Female	6.8%	5.1%	5.1%	10.7%	18.0%	5.9%
Hispanic	5.8%	3.6%	2.6%	7.4%	10.7%	2.9%
Non-Hispanic White	6.4%	5.2%	4.7%	11.9%	19.7%	5.8%
Non-Hispanic Black	2.6%	2.8%	6.5%	8.6%	13.8%	3.3%
Non-Hispanic Asian	4.3%	3.1%	1.6%	4.7%	12.9%	5.4%
Non-Hispanic Other	8.9%	2.7%	3.4%	9.6%	21.5%	4.0%
Age 18-24	10.4%	3.8%	4.5%	13.7%	21.9%	3.9%
Age 25-34	5.2%	3.4%	3.7%	12.3%	21.7%	5.9%
Age 35-44	6.4%	7.1%	4.2%	11.7%	20.4%	6.1%
Age 45-54	5.8%	6.9%	4.5%	11.5%	17.1%	4.4%
Age 55-64	4.4%	2.4%	4.7%	10.1%	13.7%	3.8%
Age 65-74	5.1%	4.4%	4.7%	6.9%	14.1%	5.6%
Age 75+	3.5%	1.9%	4.0%	2.3%	6.5%	4.1%
Grade School	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	4.6%	3.4%	0.3%
Some High School	2.7%	2.4%	3.8%	2.4%	3.5%	2.1%
High School Graduate	3.7%	2.5%	2.2%	6.6%	11.0%	2.7%
Some College	6.2%	4.3%	4.3%	10.7%	18.0%	4.5%
College Graduate	7.4%	6.2%	6.3%	14.6%	25.0%	6.4%
Graduate School	9.8%	8.2%	6.6%	15.3%	25.4%	10.7%

**Figure 6. Percent of U.S. Adults Reporting How They First Learned about an Arts Event They Ultimately Attended (2022)**

From one's partner or spouse	8.0%
From other family members	8.0%
<b>From friends, neighbors, or coworkers</b>	<b>14.7%</b>
From a community center	5.6%
Via print or broadcast media	11.3%
<b>Via social media</b>	<b>17.0%</b>
From another source	2.6%

4. **For many art forms, the share of adults personally creating and/or performing has either grown modestly or held flat since the most recent survey period.** This analysis includes data from the NEA's 2020 Arts Basic Survey (ABS), which, like the SPPA, was conducted in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau (see *Figure 7*).<sup>12</sup>

- After dipping slightly in 2020 (pre-pandemic), the share of adults who worked with textiles, played a musical instrument, took artistic photos, or did creative writing, rose back to 2017 levels.
- The proportion of adults singing declined from 2017 to 2022, by five percentage points. (There is no comparable figure available for 2020.)
- Involving 22 percent of adults in 2022 and 2020, social dancing is the most popular activity across all forms of personal arts performance and creation.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/arts-data-profile-series/adp-32>.

**Figure 7. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Performed or Created Art, by Selected Activities (2017, 2020, 2022)<sup>13</sup>**

	2017 SPPA	2020 ABS	2022 SPPA	2017-2022		2020-2022	
				Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change	Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change
Create pottery, ceramics, or jewelry	4.1%	3.6%	4.4%	+0.3 pp <sup>n</sup>	+6% <sup>n</sup>	+0.8 pp <sup>n</sup>	+22% <sup>n</sup>
Create leatherwork, metalwork, or woodwork	6.6%	6.5%	9.0%	+2.4 pp	+36%	+2.5 pp	+38%
Do weaving, crocheting, quilting, needlepoint, knitting, or sewing	11.7%	9.2%	11.7%	-0.1 pp <sup>n</sup>	-0% <sup>n</sup>	+2.4 pp	+26%
Sing alone, in a social gathering, or in a group or choir	25.4%	N/A	20.2%	-5.2 pp	-21%	N/A	N/A
Play a musical instrument	10.9%	9.6%	11.4%	+0.5 pp <sup>n</sup>	+4% <sup>n</sup>	+1.8 pp	+19%
Play a musical instrument with one or more partners, a band, orchestra, or other music group	3.9%	N/A	3.0%	-0.9 pp <sup>n</sup>	-22% <sup>n</sup>	N/A	N/A
Do acting	2.3%	1.1%	1.6%	-0.7 pp <sup>n</sup>	-30% <sup>n</sup>	+0.5 pp <sup>n</sup>	+42% <sup>n</sup>
Do social dancing, including dancing at weddings, clubs, or other social settings	N/A	22.5%	21.8%	N/A	N/A	-0.8 pp <sup>n</sup>	-3% <sup>n</sup>
Perform or practice dance	N/A	3.1%	2.0%	N/A	N/A	-1.1 pp	-36%
Create films or videos as an artistic activity	5.2%	3.7%	4.0%	-1.2 pp	-22%	+0.4 pp <sup>n</sup>	+10% <sup>n</sup>
Take photographs as an artistic activity	13.8%	10.4%	13.3%	-0.5 pp <sup>n</sup>	-4% <sup>n</sup>	+2.9 pp	+28%
Create other visual art <sup>14</sup>	13.4%	8.1%	10.7%	N/A	N/A	+2.6 pp	+32%
Do creative writing, such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or plays	6.6%	4.9%	6.9%	+0.3 pp <sup>n</sup>	+5% <sup>n</sup>	+2.0 pp	+41%
Design, code, or create any games, software, or tools	N/A	N/A	2.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Create any performance or work of visual art using a computer or mobile device	N/A	N/A	4.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: <sup>n</sup> The reported difference is not statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

13 2020 data came from the Arts Basic Survey.

14 The question-item about visual art making was worded differently in the 2017, 2020, and 2022 surveys. In addition, the placement of this item varied between 2017 and 2020/2022. In 2017, respondents were asked whether they painted, drew, sculpted, or did printmaking; this question was the first in a series of questions about art making. In 2020, respondents were asked whether they did “other” visual art such as paintings, sculpture, or graphic designs; this item was asked *after* respondents had answered questions about pottery, leatherwork, weaving, and creating in various performing art forms, film, and photography. In 2022, respondents were asked whether they did “other” visual art such as paintings, sculpture, graphic designs, or digital art; this item was also asked *after* respondents had answered questions about pottery, leatherwork, weaving, and creating in various performing art forms, film, and photography.



**5. Reading of novels or short stories, and of books in general, has declined sharply over the last five- and 10-year periods (see Figures 8-9).**

- In 2022, fewer than 50 percent of adults read any book (in print or electronically) in the previous 12 months. This rate is four and six points lower than in 2017 and 2012, respectively.<sup>15</sup>
- Over the previous ten years, reading of novels and short stories has declined at a 17 percent rate. Just under 38 percent of adults—the lowest share on record with the survey—now read in these genres.
- The share of poetry-readers lost some ground between 2017 and 2022, but remains above the 2012 level.

**Figure 8. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Read Any Book (2012, 2017, 2022)<sup>16</sup>**

2012	2017	2022	2017-2022	
			Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change
54.6%	52.7%	48.5%	-4.2 pp	-8%

**Figure 9. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Read Novels or Short Stories, Poetry, and Plays (2012, 2017, 2022)<sup>17</sup>**

	2012	2017	2022	2017-2022	
				Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change
Novels or short stories	45.2%	41.8%	37.6%	-4.2 pp	-10%
Poetry	6.7%	11.7%	9.2%	-2.5 pp	-22%
Plays	2.9%	3.7%	2.4%	-1.3 pp	-34%

<sup>15</sup> Respondents were asked to omit book-reading required for work or school.

<sup>16</sup> Respondents to this question-item may have included audiobooks, but the question did not reference audiobooks specifically. See p. 16 for the percentage of adults who responded “yes” to reading books, and/or yes to audiobook-listening.

<sup>17</sup> Respondents to these question-items may have listened to such works via streaming, broadcasts, or recordings, but the question did not reference these media formats specifically. See p. 16 for the percentage of adults who responded “yes” to reading in these genres, and/or yes to listening via streaming, broadcasts, or recordings.

## Reading and/or Listening to Books and Literature

A previous NEA research report, *How Do We Read? Let's Count the Ways* (2020), examined demographic and behavioral profiles of adult groups who read and/or listened to books via different media. Similarly, as first noted in the NEA blog post, “New Survey Reports Size of Poetry’s Audience—Streaming Included” (April 6, 2023), the 2022 SPPA permits us to report the share of adults who used

technology to engage with books and distinct literary genres. See Figures 10 and 11, below.

By the terms of this more inclusive definition, the 2022 share of adults who read books and/or listened to audiobooks (52 percent) was slightly lower than the corresponding share in 2017 (55 percent). No comparable data exist prior to 2017.

**Figure 10. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Read and/or Listened to Books (2022)**

Read Books	Listened to Audiobooks	Read Books and/or Listened to Audiobooks
48.5%	18.5%	51.9%

**Figure 11. Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Read Literary Works and/or Listened to Them via Streaming, Broadcasts, or Recordings (2022)**

	Read	Listened via Media	Read and/or Listened via Media
Novels or short stories	37.6%	17.6%	43.2%
Poetry	9.2%	4.8%	11.5%
Plays	2.4%	N/A	N/A

- 6. With the exception of jazz and classical music, the rate of music-listening via electronic or digital media held steady between 2017 and 2022.** Many other types of arts consumption via media, for which comparison data are available, saw declines in participation (see *Figure 12*).

  - Sixty-three percent of adults used media in 2022 to listen to music *other* than jazz music, Latin, Spanish, or salsa music, or classical music or opera—roughly the same share as five years earlier. The share of adults listening to Latin, Spanish, or salsa music (17 percent) was also largely unchanged.
  - The share of adults using a device to view art fell from 16 percent in 2017 to 11 percent in 2022.
  - In 2022, 14 percent of adults consumed programs or podcasts about books or writers in 2022. Five years earlier, 19 percent did this activity.

**Figure 12. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Consumed Art via Electronic or Digital Media (2017, 2022)**

	2017-2022			
	2017	2022	Percentage point (pp) change	Rate of change
Watched or listened to jazz music	20.0%	16.3%	-3.7 pp	-18%
Watched or listened to Latin, Spanish, or salsa music	18.5%	16.8%	-1.7 pp <sup>n</sup>	-9% <sup>n</sup>
Watched or listened to classical music or opera	20.6%	14.3%	-6.3 pp	-31%
Watched or listened to other kinds of music	65.2%	63.0%	-2.2 pp <sup>n</sup>	-3% <sup>n</sup>
Watched or listened to theater productions	16.2%	11.0%	-5.2 pp	-32%
Watched or listened to dance performances	14.1%	9.9%	-4.2 pp	-30%
Watched or listened to programs, podcasts, or other video or audio content about music, dance, or theater	N/A	18.4%	N/A	N/A
Watched or listened to programs, podcasts, or other video or audio content about the visual arts	14.0%	9.0%	-5.0 pp	-35%
Watched or listened to programs, podcasts, or other video or audio content about books or writers	19.1%	13.6%	-5.4 pp	-28%
Watched or listened to documentaries of any kind	N/A	37.0%	N/A	N/A
Viewed art via device	16.0%	11.1%	-4.9 pp	-31%
Viewed or interacted with an art exhibit or performance via device in a museum, theater, or concert hall	N/A	7.1%	N/A	N/A

Note: <sup>n</sup> The reported difference is not statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

7. **Most adults learned an arts subject by means other than classes or lessons.**<sup>18</sup> In 2022, approximately 26 percent of adults learned an arts subject through friends or family, or by teaching oneself (see Figure 13).
- Just under 4 percent of adults learned vocal or instrumental music through classes or lessons, while 12 percent learned through other means (e.g., through friends, as part of a family tradition, or teaching oneself).
  - Six percent of adults took classes or lessons in photography, while 2 percent learned through other means.
  - Whether through classes/lessons or other means, nearly 5 percent of adults learned about computer animation, creative coding, or digital art making.

**Figure 13. Percent of U.S. Adults Who Learned an Art Form (2022)**

	% Who Took Classes or Lessons	% Who Learned by Other Means	% Who Learned Either through Classes/Lessons or Other Means
<b>Any Arts Subject</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>29.1%</b>
Music	3.8%	12.1%	14.2%
Photography or filmmaking	1.8%	6.6%	7.4%
Other visual arts	2.6%	6.4%	7.1%
Acting or theater	0.8%	1.7%	2.1%
Dance	2.1%	6.7%	8.0%
Creative writing	1.9%	3.6%	4.7%
Art history or art or music appreciation	2.1%	5.8%	6.9%
Creative coding, computer animation, or digital art	2.3%	4.1%	4.8%

<sup>18</sup> This was also the case five years earlier. According to results from the 2017 SPPA, 9.5 percent of adults took arts classes or lessons, while 17.2 percent learned through other means. Because the question-items for arts-related learning in both survey years were not identical, however, the 2022 and 2017 results for this composite measure are not fully comparable. (See NEA, *U.S. Patterns of Arts Participation: A Full Report from the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, p. 80: <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/publications/us-patterns-arts-participation-full-report-2017-survey-public-participation-arts>.)

## CODA: Other Forms of Cultural and Civic Engagement

The 2022 SPPA asked about a variety of types of artistic, cultural, and civic engagement not featured in this report. For example, the survey reveals that the share of adults who engaged in “interior design, architectural design, fashion design, or landscaping” grew from 14 percent in 2017 to 17 percent in 2022. Gardening also increased from the 2017 rate: nearly 40 percent of U.S. adults did this activity either indoors or outdoors in 2022, up from 37 percent five years earlier.

As with attendance at most arts activities in 2022, attendance at amateur or professional sports events fell to 26 percent, down from nearly 35 percent in 2017. At 34 percent in 2022, the share of adults who exercised or did sports was relatively unchanged from the 2017 level.

Furthermore, outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, and canoeing hovered at the same rate in both survey years: roughly 31 percent of adults did these activities. On the other hand, the share of adults who played video or computer games was also roughly the same in both 2017 and 2022: around 35 percent.

For many types of arts-related activities, there were declines in participation. In 2022, 10 percent of adults personally restored, rebuilt, or customized objects (e.g., historic homes, classic vehicles, or furniture), compared with 18 percent five years earlier. The share of adults who cooked “as an artistic activity,” or took a cooking class, slipped from 14 percent in 2017 to roughly 9 percent in 2022. And, in 2022, 12 percent acquired a piece of art, 10 percent donated to an arts organization or project, and 3 percent subscribed to season’s tickets with an arts organization or event. Each of those figures is down 1 to 2 percentage points from the 2017 levels.

At roughly 5 percent, meanwhile, the share of adults who participated in book clubs or reading groups in 2022 did not change significantly from five years earlier. In 2022, for the first time, the SPPA asked the nation’s adults whether they had visited a public library: 23 percent reported having done so. Also new to 2022 SPPA were questions about volunteering in general—20 percent of adults did this activity—and participating in community activities, meetings, or events, which also involved 20 percent of adults. Future NEA research will examine the relationship between participating in the arts and some of these other types of cultural and civic activities.



# CONCLUSIONS

The 2022 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) paints a complex picture of the nation's engagement with arts activities from July 2021 to July 2022. This period roughly corresponded with the second half of the second year, and the first half of the third year, following COVID-19's arrival in the United States.

Data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis have shown that arts and cultural industries were among the hardest hit by COVID-19, even if, by the end of 2021, most had regained at least some ground.<sup>19</sup> Although the SPPA results do not permit us to know exactly how arts participation habits evolved during the pandemic, the data suggest that the slow recovery of the sector was mirrored by sluggish rates of arts attendance, compared with five or even ten years earlier.

Two categories of attendance that appear not to have been severely affected were: visits to parks, monuments, neighborhoods, or buildings with historic or design value—here the declines from the 2017 rates were relatively modest—and attendance at music, dance, or theater events outside the typology of the NEA survey questions. Attendance at these unspecified activities accounted for the only growth in arts attendance between 2017 and 2022. More research will be needed to quantify attendance for the individual event types composing this category.

Beyond attendance, another arts activity that experienced a decline from 2017 and 2012 levels is the reading of books and literature, especially novels and short stories. The fiction-reading rate has diminished over several survey periods, even as arts consumption via media has come to involve three out of four U.S. adults.

Yet large numbers of people nationwide—more than half of all adults—personally created and/or performed art in the 2022 survey year. The volume and variety of this activity, while they cannot make up for the losses in audiences and readership, are as persuasive as any other statistic about the arts' enduring role in the everyday lives of Americans.

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19 See "Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account," NEA website: <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/arts-and-cultural-production-satellite-account>.



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