

National Endowment for the Arts



**Arts Participation 2008**  
Highlights from a National Survey



**“Whatever art offered the  
men and women of previous eras,  
what it offers our own, it seems  
to me, is space—a certain  
breathing room for the spirit.”**

**—John Updike**

# Preface

There are many ways to measure a nation's cultural vitality. One way is to chart the public's involvement with arts events and activities over time. The NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts remains the largest periodic study of arts participation in the United States, and it is conducted in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau. The large number of survey respondents—similar in make-up to the total U.S. adult population—permits a statistical snapshot of America's engagement with the arts by frequency and activity type. The survey has taken place five times since 1982, allowing researchers to compare trends not only for the total adult population, but also for demographic subgroups.

In any given year of the survey, however, researchers face a practical challenge. To what extent is arts participation shaped by broader social, cultural, or economic patterns—or, for that matter, by policies and programs affecting the arts? The survey is not designed to ascertain *why* arts participation levels have shifted over the years—although researchers can test correlations between arts activity and a host of behaviors and characteristics.

The challenge is especially acute when reviewing the 2008 results. The survey's planners, along with most of the nation, did not anticipate the economic downturn that began in late 2007. When the survey was conducted in May of the following year, the recession (though still undeclared) had been in effect for nearly six months, and gas and airline prices were making travel costs prohibitive for many Americans. The survey cannot prove that weak consumer spending over this period directly affected arts participation rates. Yet this much is certain: adult attendance at arts events declined for virtually all art forms in 2008, compared with the prior survey period, 2002.

For the 12 months ending in May 2008, more than 81 million Americans visited an arts museum or gallery, or attended at

least one of the following types of arts events: theater; opera; ballet or other dance; or classical music, jazz, or Latin/salsa concerts. This group composes over 36 percent of the U.S. adult population, and it does not include those who visited an arts or crafts fair or festival, took an architectural tour, or read literature. Yet for most of these individual activities—literary reading is the single exception—participation rates have weakened over the past six years.<sup>1</sup>

Taking a long view of arts participation trends, one suspects that other factors besides the economic climate contributed to the generally lower rates of attendance. (After all, the recession spanned only half of the May 2007–May 2008 survey period.) For one thing, 18–44-year-olds are not attending arts events at the same rate as they did 26 years ago. As a group, arts participants are older than before. They also are increasingly older than the average adult. Nowhere is this trend more apparent than for jazz concert-going, which formerly drew a larger percentage of young adults than all other art forms. Arts attendance continued to decline for the youngest Americans in 2008, but it also dropped for 45–54-year-olds—a group that historically has made up a significant share of arts audiences.

More research is needed to understand this latest development—and also to learn why another group with traditionally higher attendance rates is now participating less than before. Throughout the 26-year history of the survey, college-educated adults have been among the most active arts participants. Although the same is true in 2008, they have markedly reduced their attendance levels since 2002 and 1982, even as declines have persisted for less educated groups.

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<sup>1</sup> For musical theater, however, the decline in attendance from 2002 to 2008 was statistically insignificant. For more analysis of the data on literary reading, see National Endowment for the Arts, *Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy* (2009).

Quite possibly, an explanation for the changes in attendance levels can be found in other parts of the survey, those dealing with more varied forms of arts participation. Such forms include arts creation and performance, arts learning, and participation through new media technologies. More detailed questions about Internet use were added only in 2008, and so we lack trend data to show how the relationship between arts and online activity has changed over time. Yet one captivating finding is that most adults who use the Internet to engage with artworks do so at least once a week. Future analyses will show the extent to which online participants differ from other arts participants, and what are some overlapping characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, new questions addressing arts learning—and the use of community venues for arts participation—will shed light on the substantial role that civic and educational institutions play in fostering arts appreciation. Already we know from previous research that arts participation and civic engagement are measurably linked, with arts attendees and literary readers more than twice as likely as others to play sports and attend sports events, do exercise and outdoor activities, and volunteer in their communities.<sup>3</sup> We

also know that prior education, including exposure to arts education, are critical factors associated with high levels of adult participation in the arts. Data from the 2008 survey may support more findings in this vein.

For the time being, the survey poses an opportunity to contemplate the costs of reduced arts participation, and to review strategies—in arts programming and arts learning, in public policy and popular media—for cultivating this vital form of personal and social engagement. In a recession, those costs may be even greater than before, as entire segments of the U.S. population, especially young adults and less educated and lower-income groups, are denied life-changing experiences through art. Such experiences are important not only for producing an inspired and imaginative citizenry, but also for preserving and articulating our cultural heritage as Americans.

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<sup>2</sup> See “Conclusion,” p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> NEA, *The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life* (2006).

# Key Findings

The source for the following statistics, charts, and tables is the NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, unless otherwise specified. The survey was conducted most recently in May 2008, and it asked a large, nationally representative sample of adults (18 and above) about their participation in arts events and activities over the previous 12 months.

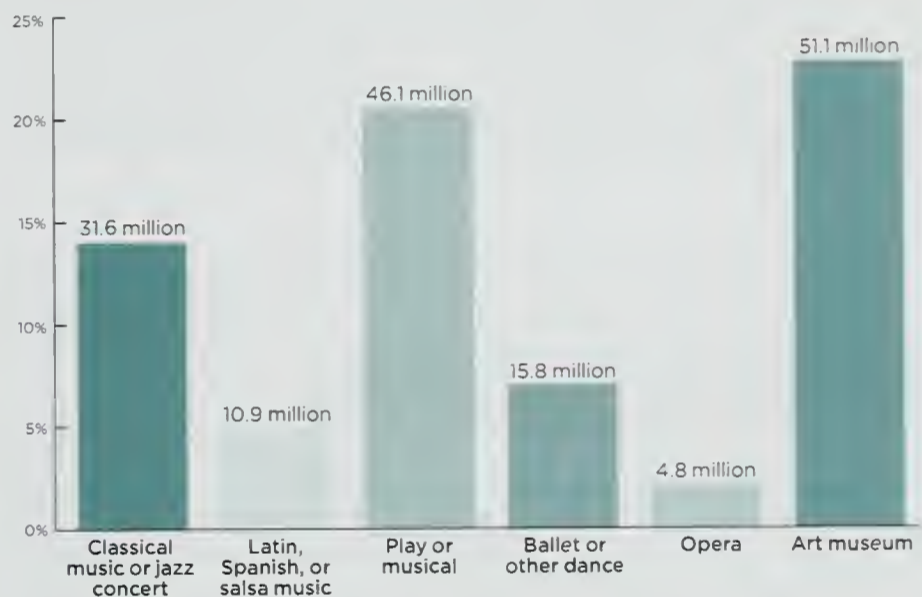
## ATTENDING ARTS EXHIBITS AND PERFORMANCES

### 1) One in three adults attended an art museum or an arts performance in the 12-month survey period.

- 36.2 percent of all U.S. adults—or 81.3 million Americans—visited an art museum or gallery or attended at least one type of performing arts event.<sup>1</sup>
- 22.7 percent of all adults visited an art museum or gallery.
- Plays or musicals drew 20.5 percent of all adults. Fewer adults attended other types of performances: classical music or jazz (14.0 percent of all adults); ballet or other dance (7.0 percent); Latin or salsa music (4.9 percent); and opera (2.1 percent).

Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Attending Arts Events, 2008

Millions of adults attending arts events, by type



In this chart, adults are counted multiple times if they participated in more than one type of arts event

### 2) Smaller percentages of adults attended performing arts events than in previous years.

- Opera and jazz participation significantly decreased for the first time, with attendance rates falling below what they were in 1982.<sup>2</sup>
- Classical music attendance continued to decline—at a 29 percent rate since 1982—with the steepest drop occurring from 2002 to 2008.
- Only musical plays saw no statistically significant change in attendance since 2002.

Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Attending Arts Performances: 1982–2008<sup>†</sup>

					Change		Rate of change	
	1982	1992	2002	2008	2002–2008	1982–2008	2002–2008	1982–2008
Jazz	9.6%	10.6%	10.8%	7.8%	-3.0 pp	-1.8 pp	-28%	-19%
Classical music	13.0%	12.5%	11.6%	9.3%	-2.3 pp	-3.7 pp	-20%	-29%
Opera	3.0%	3.3%	3.2%	2.1%	-1.1 pp	-0.9 pp	-34%	-30%
Musical plays	18.6%	17.4%	17.1%	16.7%	-0.4* pp	-1.9 pp	-2%*	-10%
Non-musical plays	11.9%	13.5%	12.3%	9.4%	-2.9 pp	-2.5 pp	-24%	-21%
Ballet	4.2%	4.7%	3.9%	2.9%	-1.0 pp	-1.3 pp	-26%	-31%

pp=percentage points

<sup>†</sup> In this brochure, all tables reporting long-term attendance trends exclude "other dance" and "Latin, Spanish, or salsa concerts." Participation in these activities has been tracked, respectively, since 1992 and 2008

\* statistically insignificant

## Key Findings

### 3) Attendance for the most popular types of arts events—such as museums and craft fairs—also declined.

- After topping 26 percent in 1992 and 2002, the art museum attendance rate slipped to 23 percent in 2008—comparable to the 1982 level.<sup>3</sup>
- The proportion of U.S. adults touring parks or historical buildings (24.9 percent) has diminished by one-third since 1982.

**Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Attending Art Museums, Parks, and Festivals: 1982–2008<sup>†</sup>**

	1982	1992	2002	2008	Change		Rate of change	
					2002–2008	1982–2008	2002–2008	1982–2008
Art museums/galleries	22.1%	26.7%	26.5%	22.7%	-3.8 pp	+0.6* pp	-14%	+3%*
Parks/historical buildings	37.0%	34.5%	31.6%	24.9%	-6.7 pp	-12.1 pp	-21%	-33%
Craft/visual arts festivals	39.0%	40.7%	33.4%	24.5%	-8.9 pp	-14.5 pp	-27%	-37%

pp=percentage points

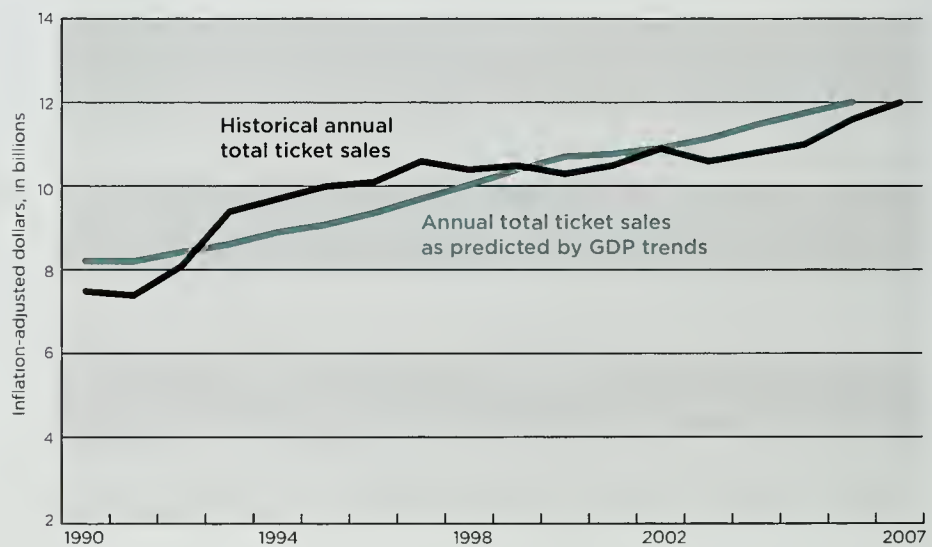
<sup>†</sup> Excludes American adults attending “performing arts festivals”—20.8 percent in 2008—tracked for the first time that year.

\*statistically insignificant

### 4) The declines occurred in a worsening economic climate, and as travel costs were rising.

- At the time of the 2008 survey, the U.S. economy had been in recession for six months. Consumer spending throughout the survey period was weak.<sup>4</sup>
- Consumer spending on performing arts admissions tracks closely with trends in the U.S. economy (*see adjacent chart*). NEA research suggests that annual consumer spending on the performing arts will drop by 0.8 percent for every 1 percent decline in Gross Domestic Product.<sup>5</sup>
- For the 2008 survey period, gas prices averaged \$3.10 per gallon. In contrast, the average per-gallon price of gasoline was only \$1.40 during the 2002 survey period.<sup>6</sup>
- Literary reading—often the most affordable form of arts participation—increased from 2002 to 2008.<sup>7</sup>

**Relationship between Performing Arts Ticket Sales and United States GDP: 1990–2007**



Data source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

## 5) Long-term trends suggest fundamental shifts in the relationship between age and arts attendance.

- Performing arts attendees are increasingly older than the average U.S. adult.
- Jazz concert-goers are no longer the youngest group of arts participants.
- Since 1982, young adult (18–24-year-old) attendance rates have declined significantly for jazz, classical music, ballet, and non-musical plays.
- From 2002 to 2008, however, 45–54-year-olds—historically a large component of arts audiences—showed the steepest declines in attendance for most arts events.

Median Age of Arts Attendees: 1982–2008

	1982	1992	2002	2008	Change in years	
					2002–2008	1982–2008
U.S. adults, average	39	41	43	45	+2	+6
Jazz	29	37	42	46	+4	+17
Classical music	40	44	47	49	+2	+9
Opera	43	44	47	48	+1	+5
Musicals	39	42	44	45	+1	+6
Non-musical plays	39	42	44	47	+3	+8
Ballet	37	40	44	46	+2	+9
Art museums	36	39	44	43	-1	+7

Percentage of Adults Ages 18–24 Attending Arts Events in 1982 and 2008

	1982	2008	Change	Rate of change
Jazz	17.5%	7.3%	-10.2 pp	-58%
Classical music	11.0%	6.9%	-4.1 pp	-37%
Opera	2.0%	1.2%	-0.8* pp	-40%*
Musicals	16.6%	14.5%	-2.1* pp	-13%*
Non-musical plays	10.7%	8.2%	-2.5 pp	-23%
Ballet	3.9%	2.5%	-1.4 pp	-36%
Art museums	22.7%	22.9%	+0.2* pp	+1%*

pp=percentage points  
\*statistically insignificant

Percentage of Adults Ages 45–54 Attending Arts Events in 2002 and 2008

	2002	2008	Change	Rate of change
Jazz	13.9%	9.8%	-4.1 pp	-30%
Classical music	15.2%	10.2%	-5.0 pp	-33%
Opera	4.0%	2.4%	-1.6 pp	-40%
Musicals	19.3%	17.4%	-1.9* pp	-10%*
Non-musical plays	15.2%	8.7%	-6.5 pp	-43%
Ballet	5.1%	3.2%	-1.9 pp	-37%
Art museums	32.9%	23.3%	-9.6 pp	-29%

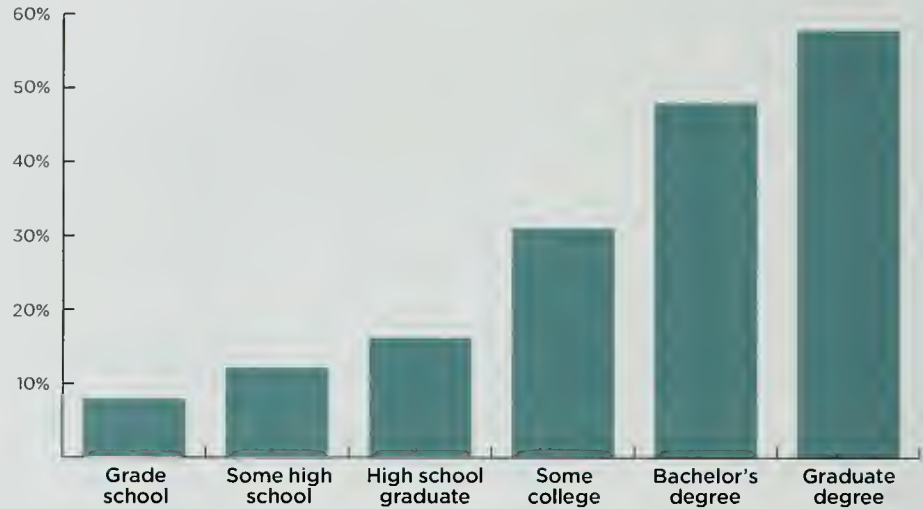
pp=percentage points  
\*statistically insignificant

## Key Findings

### 6) Arts activity still rises with education level. Yet even the most educated Americans are participating less than before.

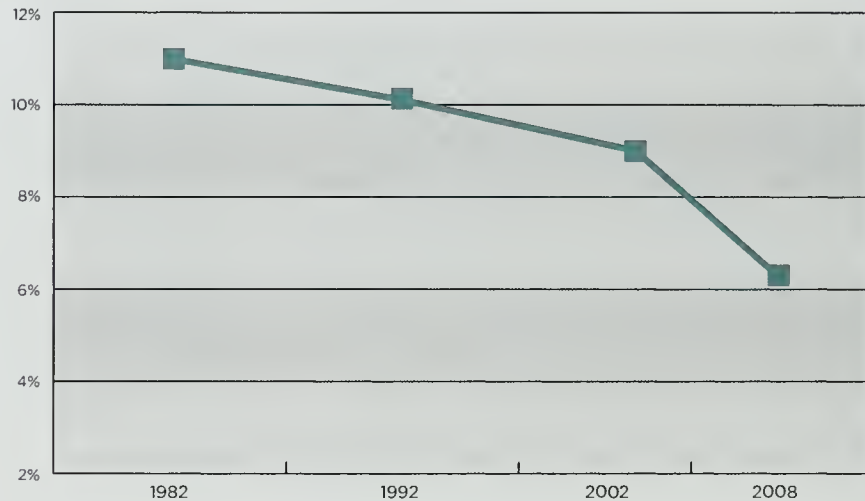
- College-educated adults (including those with graduate or professional degrees) have curbed their attendance of events in nearly all art forms.
- For these Americans, ballet has declined at the sharpest rate—down 43 percent since 1982.
- Less educated adults have significantly reduced their already low levels of attendance.<sup>8</sup>
- Previous research has shown that education, which closely correlates with income levels, is a key predictor of arts attendance.<sup>9</sup>

Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Attending Arts Performances, by Highest Level of Education: 2008



Percentage of College-Educated Adults Attending Ballet: 1982-2008

(Bachelor's degree or higher)



Percentage of College-Educated Adults Attending Arts Events: 1982-2008

(Bachelor's degree or higher)

	1982	1992	2002	2008	Change		Rate of change	
					2002-2008	1982-2008	2002-2008	1982-2008
Jazz	19.4%	22.1%	20.9%	14.9%	-6.0 pp	-4.5 pp	-29%	-23%
Classical music	33.1%	28.0%	25.9%	20.1%	-5.8 pp	-13.0 pp	-22%	-39%
Opera	8.0%	8.0%	7.9%	5.2%	-2.7 pp	-2.8 pp	-34%	-35%
Musicals	40.5%	32.8%	32.6%	32.7%	+0.1* pp	-7.8 pp	<1%*	-19%
Non-musical plays	30.2%	28.1%	25.5%	19.8%	-5.7 pp	-10.4 pp	-22%	-34%
Ballet	11.0%	10.1%	9.0%	6.3%	-2.7 pp	-4.7 pp	-30%	-43%
Art museums	49.2%	51.6%	50.5%	44.5%	-6.0 pp	-4.7 pp	-12%	-10%

pp=percentage points

\*statistically insignificant



## OTHER MODES OF PARTICIPATION: CREATING, PERFORMING, LISTENING, AND LEARNING

### 7) Adults generally are creating or performing at lower rates—despite opportunities for displaying their work online.

- Only photography increased from 1992 to 2008—reflecting, perhaps, greater access through digital media.
- The proportion of U.S. adults doing creative writing has hovered around 7.0 percent.
- The rate of classical music performance slipped from 1992 to 2002, then grew over the next six years.
- The adult participation rate for weaving or sewing was almost twice as great in 1992 as in 2008. Yet this activity remains one of the most popular forms of arts creation.

Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Performing or Creating Art: 1992-2008

	1992 <sup>†</sup>	2002	2008	Change	
				2002-2008	1992-2008
<b>Performing:</b>					
Jazz	1.7%	1.3%	1.3%	0 pp	-0.4* pp
Classical music	4.2%	1.8%	3.0%	+1.2 pp	-1.2 pp
Opera	1.1%	0.7%	0.4%	-0.3 pp	-0.7 pp
Choir/chorus	6.3%	4.8%	5.2%	+0.4* pp	-1.1 pp
Musical plays	3.8%	2.4%	0.9%	-1.5 pp	-2.9 pp
Non-musical plays	1.6%	1.4%	0.8%	-0.6 pp	-0.8 pp
Dance	8.1%	4.3%	2.1%	-2.2 pp	-6.0 pp
<b>Making:</b>					
Painting/drawing	9.6%	8.6%	9.0%	+0.4* pp	-0.6* pp
Pottery/ceramics	8.4%	6.9%	6.0%	-0.9 pp	-2.4 pp
Weaving/sewing	24.8%	16.0%	13.1%	-2.9 pp	-11.7 pp
Photography	11.6%	11.5%	14.7%	+3.2 pp	+3.1 pp
Creative writing	7.4%	7.0%	6.9%	-0.1* pp	-0.5* pp

pp=percentage points

<sup>†</sup> First year the data became available.

\* statistically insignificant

### 8) Most Americans who enjoy artworks and performances on the Internet do so frequently.

- About 70 percent of U.S. adults went online for any purpose, typically once a day. Of those adults, 39.4 percent used the Internet to view, listen to, download, or post artworks or performances.
- Of all adults who downloaded, watched, or listened to music, theater, or dance performances online (30.1 percent), most did those activities at least once a week.
- Also typically once a week, 20.2 percent of Internet-using adults viewed paintings, sculpture, or photography online.

Percentage of Internet-Users Engaging with Art Online, 2008<sup>†</sup>

Online arts activity	Percentage	Millions of adults	Frequency of activity (on average)*
Views, listens to, or downloads music, theater, or dance performances	30.1%	47.3	At least once a week
Views paintings, sculpture, or photography	20.2%	31.7	At least once a week
Posts own artworks or performances**	7.2%	11.3	Less than once a month
Learns about performances or exhibits; purchases tickets	34.9%	54.8	Less than once a month

<sup>†</sup> 39.4 percent of Internet-using adults did one of the three shaded activities.

\* Most popular response when asked about frequency of Internet use. For questions about online arts participation, the response options included: "at least once a week"; "at least once a month but not every week"; or "less than once a month."

\*\* Includes design, music, photography, films, video, or creative writing.

## Key Findings

### 9) As in prior years, more Americans view or listen to broadcasts and recordings of arts events than attend them live.

- The sole exception is live theater, which still attracts more adults than broadcasts or recordings of plays or musicals (online media included).
- Classical music broadcasts or recordings attract the greatest number of adult listeners, followed by Latin or salsa music.
- 33.7 million Americans listened to or watched programs or recordings about books.

### Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Viewing or Listening to Art Broadcasts or Recordings, 2008

*Online media included*

	Percentage	Millions of adults
Jazz	14.2%	31.9
Classical music	17.8%	40.0
Latin or salsa music	14.9%	33.5
Opera	4.9%	11.0
Musical plays	7.9%	17.8
Non-musical plays	6.8%	15.3
Dance	8.0%	18.0
Programs about the visual arts	15.0%	33.7
Programs about books/writers	15.0%	33.7

### 10) Schools and religious institutions engage many adults in live arts events.

- One in four adults (23.7 percent) attended an elementary, middle, or high school music, theater, or dance performance in the previous 12 months.
- 19.1 percent of all adults attended a live arts performance at a church, synagogue, or other religious institution.

### 11) School-aged children often attend performances outside school, according to their parents.

- One in three adults (32.8 percent) who have children 5–17 years of age said their child had attended a music, theater, or dance performance outside school.
- Only 13.2 percent of parents with school-aged children said their child had ever taken private arts lessons. Of those parents, however, 63.6 percent said the lessons had occurred in the past year.

## Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Those events were: plays or musicals; classical music or jazz concerts; ballet or “other dance” performances; opera; and Latin/Spanish/salsa music concerts. (Elementary or high school performances were excluded.) Attendance at “other dance” events has been tracked only since 1992. In 2008, moreover, adults were asked about Latin/Spanish/salsa music attendance for the first time in the survey’s history. If “other dance” and Latin music concerts are excluded from the analysis, then the proportion of U.S. adults that attended an art museum or gallery or a performing arts event becomes 34.6 percent, or about 78 million adults, compared with roughly 40 percent in each of the three prior survey years (1982, 1992, and 2002).
- The survey does not capture attendance rates for every potential type of music performance. Yet it does ask adults about their listening preferences. For example, 27.0 percent reported liking R&B or blues; 15.4 percent and 15.2 percent of adults liked folk music and bluegrass, respectively. See [www.arts.gov/research/SPPA/](http://www.arts.gov/research/SPPA/) for more data.
- <sup>2</sup> Trend analysis in this brochure excludes data from the 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. Because of fundamental differences in data collection, that survey’s results are not comparable with any of the other NEA surveys. The 1997 survey involved a random-digit-dial telephone survey independent of the U.S. Census Bureau. (For details, see National Endowment for the Arts, *1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: Summary Report*, 1999.)
- <sup>3</sup> For the first time in the survey’s history, smaller percentages of women visited art museums than in previous years. From 1982 to 2002, women increased their art museum attendance rate from 23.1 percent to 28.2 percent. In 2008, their attendance rate retreated to 24.0 percent. See “Data and Methodology” (p. 11) for information about proxy reporting for this question.
- <sup>4</sup> During the fourth quarter of 2007, real consumer spending grew by only 1.0 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce (Bureau of Economic Analysis). For the next two consecutive quarters (January through June 2008), it grew by 0.9 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively. By comparison, real consumer spending grew by an annual average of 3.0 percent in 2006.
- <sup>5</sup> This finding is based on a regression model that represented annual consumer spending on admissions to performing arts events as a mathematical function of annual GDP (adjusted for inflation). Symbolically, the model is:
- $$\ln \text{ Admissions} = f[\text{lag}(\ln \text{ Real GDP})]$$
- “ln” is the natural log, and “lag” refers to GDP in the previous year. The model was also adjusted for auto-correlated residuals. For more information on this regression model, please contact the NEA’s Office of Research & Analysis.
- <sup>6</sup> See U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Average Price Data.” Figures are reported for U.S. city averages and for all types of gasoline per gallon.
- <sup>7</sup> From 2002 to 2008, the percentage of adults reading literature rose from 46.7 percent to 50.2 percent. For more information, see NEA, *Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy*, 2009.
- <sup>8</sup> In 1982, for example, 7.6 percent of all adults who did not pursue formal education beyond high school went to a classical music concert. By 2008, that rate dropped to 3.1 percent.
- <sup>9</sup> See NEA, *Effects of Arts Education on Participation in the Arts*, 1996, and *Age and Arts Participation: 1982–1997*, 2000.

# Conclusion

Between 2002 and 2008, the number and percentage of U.S. adults attending arts events declined for every art form except musical plays. In 2008, for the first time, non-musical plays, opera, and jazz concerts saw significantly lower rates of adult participation than in 1982, the first year of the survey. Alone among arts activities, literary reading increased in 2008. The adult attendance rate for art museums and galleries, while lower than in 1992 and 2002, was comparable to the 1982 rate.

The 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts included a new question about attendance at Latin, Spanish, or salsa music concerts. When participation rates for this activity are added to the rates for other performing arts activities and for art museum-going, the total percentage of U.S. adults who attended an arts event in 2008 is 36 percent, representing more than 81 million Americans.

The survey's administration in May 2008—nearly six months after a nationwide recession began—raises the possibility that changes in consumer spending habits affected arts participation rates in aggregate. Additionally, visits to parks and historic buildings declined in 2008, which could reflect public response to mounting travel costs. Although NEA

research has identified a close relationship between changes in the U.S. Gross Domestic Product and performing arts ticket sales, one cannot attribute the lower attendance rates solely to economic conditions with any degree of certainty.

Long-term trend analyses show an aging audience for all art forms. Young adults (18–24) are far less likely than before to attend jazz or classical music concerts, ballet, or non-musical plays. Other groups that formerly were dependable audiences for arts events have reduced their participation levels. College-educated Americans are attending at lower rates than in 1982, and, in the most recent period, 45–54-year-olds curbed their attendance.

More research is under way to examine these trends and also the respective roles of age, race or ethnicity, arts learning, and media/technology in arts participation. Greater knowledge of the interactions between arts attendance and arts creation or performance also may be required. Those topics will be explored by future studies, which, along with a full summary report of the survey data, are envisioned for 2009 and 2010. Together, the findings should give arts organizations, arts educators, and policymakers a deeper understanding of the public they serve.

# Data and Methodology

No single survey can fully capture the diverse range of arts activities and experiences now available to Americans. For a variety of art forms, however, the NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) gives a reliable measure of self-reported levels of adult participation.

This brochure presents key results from the 2008 SPPA. A more detailed examination of the survey's findings will be reported later in 2009. Researchers at the National Endowment for the Arts developed the SPPA with a team of statisticians, sociologists, economists, and representatives from various arts disciplines, and it has been conducted five times in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau: 1982, 1985, 1992, 2002, and 2008. Results from the 1985 survey were largely similar to those in 1982, and have been excluded from this brochure. The 2002 and 2008 surveys were administered as supplements to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS).

The 2008 survey instrument, as well as tables reporting arts participation rates by event type and by demographic group, are available online at [www.arts.gov/research/SPPA/](http://www.arts.gov/research/SPPA/).

Although the general contents of the SPPA questionnaires have remained similar, the 2008 survey instrument differed from the 2002 version in some ways. Both surveys retain core questions about attendance (e.g., "Did you attend a . . . during the last 12 months?"), as well as sections on watching or listening via electronic media, and personal performance or creation of art. The 2008 SPPA, however, was conducted as a supplement to the May CPS, whereas the 2002 survey was conducted with the August CPS.

Second, some sections of the 2008 questionnaire were separated into modules, with each respondent answering two of the four modules (in addition to the survey's "core" questions). Third, rather than attempt to interview all adults in the household (as in 2002), for some questions the 2008 SPPA obtained proxy responses for spouses or partners from the initial adult interviewed in each household.

In tests of this method, proxy reporting for spouse/partners yielded virtually identical results as self-reporting for the same arts activities. Yet slight differences were found for a few activities, suggesting a small degree of under-reporting of spouse/partner participation in three areas: museum-going, book-reading, and literary reading. Were adjustments made for this potential under-reporting, then the overall attendance rate for museums would increase by six tenths of a percentage point, and literary reading and book-reading rates (as reported in the NEA's *Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy*) would grow by 1.3 and 1.6 percentage points, respectively.

Both the sample size and the response rate for the 2008 SPPA increased from that of the 2002 survey—from a 70 percent response rate in 2002, and just over 17,000 adults, to 82 percent in 2008, and more than 18,000 adults. Unless otherwise noted, all estimates in this report are statistically significant at 95 percent or higher levels of confidence.

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Trio at the 2006 Savannah Music Festival. Photo by Ayano Hisa.

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