

2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Highlights Report

Key Findings

- **The percentage of U.S. adults attending a classical music performance held steady from 2008 to 2012.** Nationwide, 8.8% of all adults, or 20.7 million people, attended at least one classical music event in the 2012 survey year.
- **Music viewing and/or listening is the most popular form of media arts participation captured by the survey—whether the medium was TV, radio, or the Internet.** Fifty percent of adults used TV or radio to watch or listen to music. Twenty-nine percent of adults used the Internet to watch, listen to, or download music. One in three (34.2%, or 80.4 million adults) used handheld or mobile devices to download, watch, or listen to music performances.
- **Other than a broad category encompassing popular music, classical music was the musical genre most watched or listened to on TV, radio, or the Internet,** higher than Latin, Spanish, Salsa Music, Jazz, and Opera. Watching or listening to classical music was more popular than all other arts categories, as well, topping dance, visual arts, books, and theater.
- **Adults between the ages of 35 to 54 reduced their attendance in classical music from 2008 to 2012, but this trend is much bigger than classical music.** Participation rates in the narrower range of 35 to 44 declined in musical theatre, non-musical theatre, outdoor performing arts festivals, art museums and galleries, historic and design tours, and reading of any kind. Where is this group turning? The 35 to 54 age range increased their movie-going.
- **Playing a musical instrument remains among the most popular forms of art-making among adults.** Twelve percent of U.S. adults played a musical instrument, either alone or with others and 2.2% say they performed or practiced classical music. **Survey results continue to reveal serious gaps in participation in arts learning.** While 50-56% of U.S. adults have engaged in arts learning at some point in their lives, large disparities in participation are evident by gender, race/ethnicity, and level of educational attainment.

Important Context to Note

- **The good news is that the decline in participation in classical music from 2002 to 2008 stopped;** classical music participation held steady from 2008 to 2012. While the participation rate reported in 2008 was 9.3%, and was 8.8% in 2012, the NEA study explains that this change is not statistically significant.
- **The 2008 findings spurred orchestras to take action. Orchestras are seeking to expand the nature of participation through unprecedented experimentation.** This innovation in programming, pricing, presentation, community engagement, education and more is driven by the desire to build new audiences and increase relevance to community needs.
- **The 2012 report indicates that the nature of public participation in the arts continues to change.** The public continues to define arts participation in new ways, and orchestras are committed to making their music more accessible to Americans in the places and forms that meet their needs. Orchestras are experimenting with new technology, responding to what racial/ethnic projections mean for their own regions, and learning from other industries as they address broad cultural and generational shifts.
- **As orchestras attempt new ways of engaging audiences, they are also attaching a new rigor and discipline in analyzing results through research and documentation.** Orchestras are doing this by working collaboratively across markets, and individually, and the League is sharing their results to encourage field-wide learning. The SPPA is not built to answer questions of why changes in participation are taking place and leaves open tremendous opportunities for further research and understanding. The League and orchestras are committed to pursuing further information about orchestral music audiences and the motivations for public participation.

Additional Background

- The National Endowment for the Arts Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) was administered in July 2012 as part of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample size included 37,266 adults ages 18 and over. The NEA issued a highlight report on September 26, 2013, and will issue a full report in February 2014.
- The survey focuses on five broad areas of participation: arts attendance, reading literary works, arts consumption through electronic media, arts creation and performance, and arts learning. The survey also examines demographic variables of age, race and ethnicity, gender, and level of educational attainment.

League of American Orchestras

- The highlight report includes select findings related to music in the following ways: music of any kind, opera, classical music, jazz, Latin/Spanish/salsa music, and music other than classical, Latin or jazz. The survey does not further delineate classical music by type.
- It is important to note differences in what the SPPA covers and what the League measures:
 - The SPPA measures participation in “**classical music,**” while data from the League’s Orchestra Statistical Report focus specifically on **orchestral concerts.**
 - The SPPA provides a percentage of the U.S. **adult** population participating in at least one classical music performance. The League’s numbers on concert attendance encompass **attendees of all ages** and orchestra concerts of all types.
 - The League’s data measures **total number of seats that have been filled** at concerts (paid and unpaid), not the **number of individuals in the U.S. that attend concerts** (who may fill seats more than once).