

RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL ARTS PARTICIPATION SURVEY – JUNE 2017

The arts have the power to inspire, entertain and unite. They connect people with ideas, emotions and stories; and spark imagination, creativity and joy. The arts are intrinsically important and contribute to individual and collective wellbeing – they play an essential role in the daily lives of Australians.

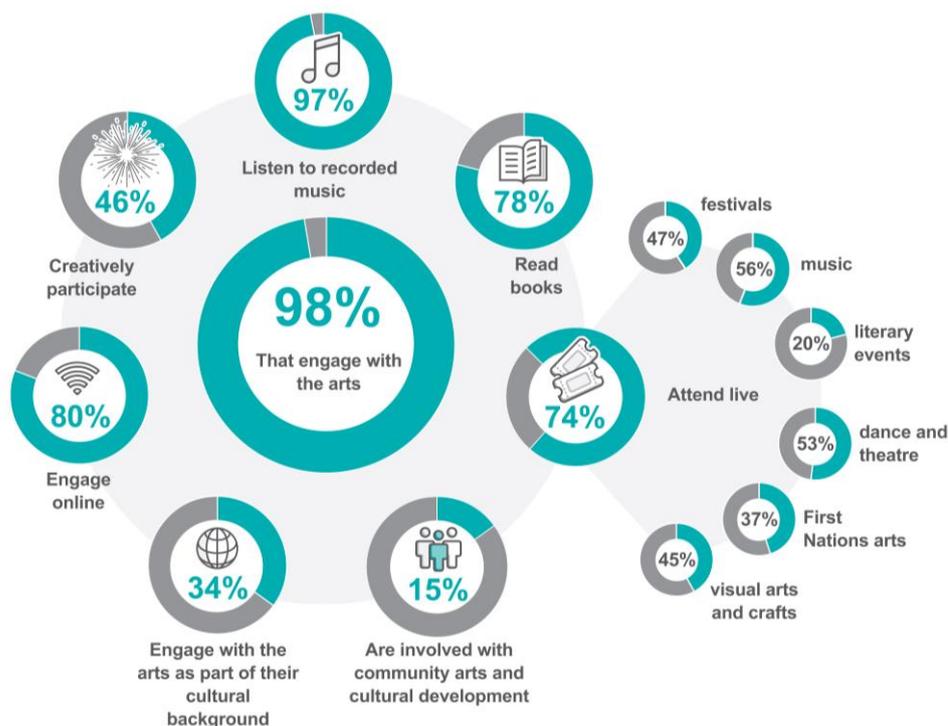
Connecting Australians: Results of the 2016 National Arts Participation Survey is the third in a landmark series by the Australia Council for the Arts. This research is designed to broaden the conversation about the arts, and to inform policy, programs and investment in the arts and well beyond. The findings confirm the significant and increasing personal value Australians place on the impact of the arts, and the ways in which they make our communities stronger and more cohesive.

The research demonstrates that the arts have a unique capacity to connect Australians from diverse backgrounds, help us to understand other people and cultures, and allow us to connect to others. We are highly connected digitally and yet we live in a global era of growing social, cultural and political division that is being evidenced through major social threats. Against this backdrop, the 2016 National Arts Participation Survey found that Australians increasingly believe the arts are critical to social cohesion – the arts reflect Australia’s diversity; shape and express identity; and create empathy, understanding and connection.

For the full report and online resources see: www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research

This fact sheet provides an overview of results for NSW.

FIGURE 1: NSW residents’ arts engagement 2016



Impacts of the arts

More Australians now recognise the many positive impacts the arts have on our daily lives and in our communities.

- In line with national trends, more NSW residents now believe the arts have a ‘big’ or ‘very big’ impact on:
 - shaping and expressing Australian identity (55% in 2016, up from 48% in 2013)
 - their ability to think creatively and develop new ideas (66%, up from 60%)
 - their sense of wellbeing and happiness (57%, up from 52%).
- Two in three NSW residents believe the arts have a ‘big’ or ‘very big’ impact on stimulating their minds (67%) and our understanding of other people and cultures (63%).

Attitudes about the arts

Australians believe that the arts reflect and contribute to society, to identity and to Australia’s international reputation. The arts give life meaning and Australians are proud of their artists.

- Around three in four NSW residents agree that:
 - First Nations arts are an important part of Australia’s culture (79%)
 - artists make an important contribution to Australian society (77%)
 - they feel proud when Australian artists do well overseas (75%)
 - the arts make for a richer and more meaningful life (73%)
 - the arts in Australia reflect the diversity of cultures present in Australia (73%)
 - the arts are an important way to get different perspectives on a topic or issue (72%).

The vast majority of Australians maintained positive attitudes about the arts in 2016. However, there has been a shift among some towards ambivalence.

- In keeping with this trend, more NSW residents ‘neither agree or disagree’ with attitude statements, such as:
 - artists make an important contribution to Australian society (19% neither agree or disagree, up from 7% in 2013)
 - it is exciting to see new styles and types of art (27% neither agree or disagree, up from 11%)
 - the arts should receive public funding (25% neither agree or disagree, up from 12%).
- In addition to increased ambivalence, more NSW residents agree that the arts are too expensive (44%, up from 37% in 2013); the arts tend to attract people who are somewhat elitist or pretentious (45%, up from 33%); and the arts are not really for people ‘like me’ (22%, up from 14%).
- While these shifts contrast with other findings in the National Arts Participation Survey, they are likely to reflect the heightened anxiety, disengagement and divisions within society at this point in time; and that many Australians maintain a narrow ingrained view of what the arts include. This is discussed in more detail in [Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#).

Giving to the arts

The high value that Australians place on the arts is reflected in the time and money they give to support artists, arts organisations and arts projects.

- One in four NSW residents give time or money to the arts (27%).
 - In 2016, 15% of NSW residents volunteered for the arts or helped artists or community groups with arts activities; 10% donated money; 10% donated to a crowdfunding campaign; and 8% joined an arts organisations membership program.

The arts and cultural diversity

For the first time in 2016, the National Arts Participation Survey collected data on engagement with the arts as part of Australians' cultural backgrounds.

- One third of NSW residents engage with their cultural background through the arts (34%).
 - In 2016, music was the most common way NSW residents engaged (20%); followed by visual arts and craft (16%); theatre (12%); and creative writing (11%) or dance (11%).

More Australians are attending First Nations arts across art forms, reflecting the high quality work of First Nations artists and initiatives to build audiences for First Nations arts.

- More than one in three NSW residents attend First Nations arts (37% in 2016, up from 22% in 2013).
 - In 2016, 22% of NSW residents attended First Nations visual arts and craft, up from 15% in 2013; 18% attended First Nations dance, up from 9% in 2013; and 16% attended First Nations music, up from 10% in 2013.

While NSW residents attend First Nations arts at a similar levels to other Australians, they are more likely to attend First Nations dance (18%, compared to 15% for other Australians).

Data available for the first time shows that the community arts and cultural development (CACD) sector is a leader in the use of the arts to support social cohesion, enabling diverse voices to be heard and connected through creating art.

- In 2016, 15% of NSW residents were involved in CACD activities that actively engaged community members in decision making art creation in collaboration with professional artists.

Arts attendance

Attending arts experiences in person enables Australians to come together as audiences and connect with artists in unmediated ways.

- Three in four NSW residents attend the arts (74% in 2016, on par with previous years).
 - In 2016, more than half of NSW residents attended live music (56%); 45% attended visual arts; 41% attended theatre; 33% attended dance; and 20% attended literature events.
- Data available for the first time show that almost half of NSW residents attend arts festivals (47%).
 - In 2016, multi-art form festivals were the most popular with 28% of NSW residents attending; one quarter attended music festivals (26%); 17% attended dance or theatre festivals; 6% attended a First Nations festival; and 5% attended a writers festival.

NSW residents attend arts festivals at a similar rate to other Australians. However, NSW residents are much more likely to attend multi-art form festivals, such as Vivid (28%, compared to 17% of other Australians).

Creative participation in the arts

Despite our busy lives, Australia remains a creative nation.

- Almost half of NSW residents creatively participated in the arts in 2016 (46%), on par with 2013.
 - In 2016, three in ten NSW residents creatively participated in visual arts and craft (29%), on par with 2013; 20% did creative writing, up from 17% in 2013; and 15% creatively participated in music, down from 21% in 2013, and on par with 14% in 2009.

Listening and reading

Listening to music and reading are vital, accessible and popular ways that Australians engage with the arts.

- Almost all NSW residents intentionally listen to recorded music (97%).
 - In 2016, 86% listened to music they owned; and three quarters listened through paid or free online streaming services (75%) – a significant increase from 2013 (42%) and 2009 (32%).
- More than three quarters of NSW residents read creative writing (78%).
 - In 2016, 60% read novels; 40% read creative non-fiction; 34% read short stories; 15% read graphic novels or comics; 12% read poetry; and 8% read plays.

Online engagement

Across Australia, online engagement with the arts is booming. Online activity is creating new opportunities to collaborate and share, and connecting artists and audiences.

- Four in five NSW residents engaged with the arts online in 2016 (80%), up from 2013 and 2009 and in line with national trends.
 - In 2016, 75% listened to music online; 28% viewed visual arts, music, dance, theatre or literature online; and 28% researched or reviewed the arts or artists.
- Facebook is the most popular digital media that NSW residents use to connect with and learn about the arts or artists (27%), followed by YouTube (23%).

Notes on data interpretation

The third National Arts Participation Survey was conducted with a nationally representative sample of 7,537 Australians aged 15 years and over in November 2016, following editions in 2009 and 2013. It encompasses engagement with the broad gamut of arts offerings across Australia, including from both commercial and not-for-profit organisations; engagement with free accessible public art; and creative participation at all levels from the hobbyist to the arts professional.

This factsheet only highlights differences that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

All sample-based surveys are subject to sampling error. For the 2016 New South Wales data, the margin of error at 50% is +/- 2%. This means that if 50% of survey respondents did a particular activity, then it is 95% likely that the population estimate will be between 48% and 52%. The margin of error for 2013 is +/- 2%, and for 2009 is +/- 3%.

The National Arts Participation Survey was sampled and weighted to be nationally representative based on age, gender and location (by states and territories and metropolitan/regional Australia). While it is representative of Australians as a whole, it is not necessarily representative of any particular sub-group or location.

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