

The Federal agency  
that supports the  
visual, literary and  
performing arts to  
benefit all Americans

Research Division Note #50 - October 25, 1993

**Public Participation in the Arts: 1982 and 1992**

According to the nationwide 1992 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) conducted by the US Bureau of the Census, 41% of the American population attended at least one of seven arts activities (jazz, classical music, opera, musicals, plays, ballet, or art museums). This 1992 participation rate means that approximately 76.2 million adults attended one or more arts performances or exhibitions during the previous year. The 1992 figure represents an increase of two percentage points above the 1982 overall attendance rate of 39%. Art museum and gallery attendance experienced the largest increase with 26.7% reporting visits to art museums or galleries as compared to the 1982 SPPA attendance rate of 22.1%. This means that nearly 50 million adults made one or more visits to an art museum or gallery in the prior 12 months, thereby exceeding the 1982 estimate, 36.2 million attenders, by 37%.

The 1992 survey provides information on three types of arts participation, via: Attendance at arts events, Broadcast and Recorded Media, and Personal Performance and Creation. Both the 1982 and 1992 SPPAs found higher participation through Broadcast and Recorded Media than Attendance at live arts events. Participation rates through Broadcast and Recorded Media are roughly double those for Attendance at live performances in jazz, classical music, and dance, and triple for opera; while musicals, plays and visual arts experience lesser differences. From 1982 to 1992, Broadcast and Recorded Media participation rates experienced the greatest increases in audiences for jazz (up 71%) and classical music on radio (up 60%) and for visual arts on television programs (up 37%).

Arts in Education

Challenge &  
Advancement

Dance

Design Arts

Expansion Arts

Folk Arts

International

Literature

Locals

Media Arts

Museum

Music

Opera-Musical  
Theater

Presenting &  
Commissioning

State & Regional

Theater

Visual Arts

The 1992 survey also reports on participation in the arts through Personal Performance and Creation. This includes personal involvement either privately (through artistic activity at home or through arts lessons) or publicly (through performance or publishing activities). Private involvement estimates range from 3.2 million people playing jazz or 7.8 million playing classical music to 13.7 million writing creatively. These private participation numbers are small relative to Attendance at live events or use of Broadcast and Recorded Media. Even smaller are the figures for involvement in public performances, with 400,000 singing opera, for example. The 11.7 million people participating in choral singing is by far the largest category of public performance, and 100,000 performing ballet is the smallest.

A summary report, Art Participation in America: 1982-1992, is available from the Research Division of the National Endowment for the Arts as Research Report #27. With the 1992 SPPA data now available, comparisons with earlier surveys conducted in 1982 and 1985 are now possible. Forthcoming research notes will explore specific topics, such as differences in participation by various demographic groups and changes from 1982 to 1992.

#### BACKGROUND:

The most comprehensive national survey on arts participation, SPPA 1992 enhances our understanding of who participates in which arts activities and how frequently. Conducted by the US Bureau of the Census, it collected data in household surveys of approximately 1,000 adults per month for a period of 12 months. Jack Faucett Associates in cooperation with Sociology Professor John P. Robinson of the University of Maryland prepared a summary report of the survey results.

SPPA 1992 reports on data concerning public attendance and participation in various arts performances and events including: jazz, classical music, opera, musicals, choral singing, plays, ballet, other dance, literature, art museums, arts/crafts fairs, and historical parks. Comparisons between the 1982 and 1992 survey results allow us to identify national trends in arts participation via Attendance, Broadcast and Recorded Media, and Personal Performance and Creation.

Most of the questions were common to both SPPA 1992 and SPPA 1982; however, a few differences and innovations in the 1992 survey deserve notice. These include additional questions about attending dance performances other than ballet, about reading and listening to literature, and on composing music, dancing, and purchasing art.

In interpreting the 1992 data, the general population increase should be taken into account. During the decade the adult population grew by 15 million people (from 170.6 million in 1982 to 185.8 million in 1992). Thus, it is possible for some arts audiences to have actually increased in numerical terms despite stable or even declining attendance rates. For instance, attendance rates for musical plays declined 1.2% from 1982 to 1992 (from 18.6% to 17.4%) even though the audience numbers increased from 30.5 to 32.3 million (a 5.9% increase).

CHANGES IN ARTS PARTICIPATION: 1982 - 1992

**Attendance at Arts Events:**

As indicated earlier, 41% of all SPPA respondents reported having attended, during the previous year, at least one of the seven benchmark activities (jazz, classical music, opera, musicals, plays, ballet, or art museums). In 1992 estimated rates of attendance were: 10.6% for jazz (19.7 million people); 12.5% for classical music (23.2 million); 3.3% for opera (6.1 million); 17.4% for musicals (32.3 million); 13.5% for plays (25.1 million); 4.7% for ballet (8.7 million); and 26.7% for art museums (49.6 million). In addition to these benchmark activities, large percentages of the adult population participated through literature (54% or 100.3 million), historic parks (34.5% or 64.1 million), and arts/crafts fairs (40.7% or 75.6 million).

Comparing the 1992 SPPA data with the 1982 SPPA allows us to identify specific trends over the decade. Among the seven benchmark activities, five showed positive changes since 1982, with the most significant increase in attendance rates at art museums and galleries from 22.1% in 1982 to 26.7% in 1992 (see Table 1). There was virtually no change in the proportions of attenders at jazz, classical music, opera, and ballet performances. The percentage was slightly down for attending musicals

(1.2 percentage points) and up slightly for plays (1.6 percentage points); neither change was statistically significant. Statistically significant decreases did occur in: literature, down from 56.9% to 54%, and visits to historic parks, down from 39% to 34.5%. A small increase (not statistically significant) was noted in attendance at arts/crafts fairs between 1982 and 1992.

While participation or attendance rates are one view of art attendance, another is total number of people attending these arts events. For example, in 1982, 21.3 million people reported attending one or more classical music performances. In 1992 this figure increased 8.9% to 23.2 million. The same applies for the percentage decrease in books read and historic parks, both of which translate into numerical increases in 1992 (from 93.3 million in 1982 to 100.3 million in 1992 for literature, up 7.3%, and from 60.6 million in 1982 to 64.1 million in 1992 for historic parks, up 5.8%). Unlike the changes for attendance rates, the differences in total number of attenders reflects the general population increase between 1982 and 1992.

Similarly, the remaining activities experienced significant increases in the total number of attenders. Art museum attendance increased from 36.2 million in 1982 to 49.6 million in 1992; musicals from 30.5 million to 32.3 million; plays from 19.5 million to 25.1 million; jazz from 15.7 million to 19.7 million; ballet from 6.9 million to 8.7 million; opera from 4.5 million to 6.1 million; and arts/crafts fairs from 63.9 million to 75.6 million. These figures show changes in the estimated total number of adults who attended arts performances in the previous year.

In sum, the most significant trends in Attendance over the decade from 1982 to 1992 were the increase in the overall attendance rate for the seven benchmark arts activities from 39% to 41% and the increase in art museum attendance of 37% or approximately 13.4 million more people in 1992 than in 1982.

#### **Via Broadcast and Recorded Media:**

Another significant area of arts participation covered in the 1992 SPPA data is that via Broadcast and Recorded

Media. By comparison, participation rates are higher in the arts via Broadcast and Recorded Media than for Attendance at arts events. This is especially true for jazz, classical music, and opera. For example, 21% of those surveyed reported watching a jazz performance on television or videocassette in the previous year, 28% listened to jazz on the radio, and 21% listened to a jazz recording, while 10.6% attended a jazz performance.

The 1992 SPPA indicates that TV and VCR viewing comprise the largest segment of Broadcast and Recorded Media participation. Television audiences were greatest for visual art (32%) and lowest for opera (12%) and musicals (15%) (See Table 2). The largest use of radio was for jazz (28%) and classical music (31%) and the lowest for musicals (4%) and plays (3%). Similarly for recordings, the 21% use for jazz and 24% use for classical music compares to 7% for opera and 6% for musicals. Thus, jazz and classical music were the preferred programming for all three media forms, with the exception of TV viewing of visual arts.

The most dramatic changes between 1982 and 1992 SPPA data are the increases in the sizes of the radio audiences for jazz (up 71% from 30.4 million to 52 million listeners) and classical music (up 60% from 36 to 57.6 million) as well as of the TV audience for visual arts programs (up 37% from 43.3 to 59.5 million). Declines occurred in viewing musicals on TV (down 6% from 29.8 to 27.9 million viewers) and plays (down 13% from 36.5 to 31.6 million). Other categories showed little if any change in participation through Broadcast and Recorded Media over the decade.

The decade also marked important new technological developments in media that could be used for arts content, including digital sound innovations, compact disc use, and greater access to cable television and videocassettes. In response to this changing environment, several new media questions were asked of respondents in the 1992 SPPA, and some of the questions in the previous SPPA were modified. For instance, questions on dance also included modern, folk, and tap dance forms in addition to ballet. These differences should be kept in mind while comparing 1982 and 1992 survey results.

All in all, the 1992 SPPA indicates significant growth since 1982 in radio audiences for jazz, classical music, and opera and some decline in broadcasts of musicals and theater productions. The growth in audiences for the visual arts is also substantial; however, the medium of radio marks the greatest audience increase.

#### **Personal Performance and Creation:**

The third form of arts participation measured in the survey was Personal Performance and Creation of art. According to SPPA 1992, .70% or 1.3 million people performed jazz, .90% or 1.7 million played classical music publicly, .24% or .4 million performed opera, and .73% or 1.4 million sung in musicals (see Table 3). This reflects general music preference figures overall, but these figures are dwarfed by the far larger numbers of people who participated in choral or glee club singing (6.3% or 11.7 million). Figures also indicate that the percentage of those who had acted publicly (1.6%) was more than double the average rates ( $2.57/4 = .642$ ) for the four main music types (jazz, classical music, opera, and musicals). Moreover, public participation is forty times higher for modern, folk, and tap dance combined (1.2%) than for ballet (.03%).

Personal Performance and Creation figures indicate even larger percentages and numbers of participants engaging in arts activities privately rather than performing before the public (see Table 3). Thus, 1.7% or 3.2 million respondents played jazz music during the previous year, while somewhat less than half of those (.7% or 1.3 million) had performed jazz publicly. Greater numbers had played classical music (4.2% or 7.8 million); however, the number of people playing classical music in public were smaller (.9% or 1.7 million). Participation rates are similar for musicals, with 3.8% or 7.1 million people participating but only .73% or 1.4 million doing so in public. The lowest rates are recorded for opera (1.1% or 2 million participating and only .24% or 400,000 thousand performing publicly) and ballet (.2% or 400,000 thousand people dancing ballet and .03% or 100,000 thousand performing in public). The highest rates occur for modern, folk, and tap dance (8.1% or 15 million dancing and 1.2% or 2.2 million dancing in public) and writing creatively (7.4% or 13.7 million writing [non-

published] and .9% or 1.7 million publishing their work). Higher public participation levels are also recorded for public performance of choral singing and acting, although personal participation rates are not available for these arts activities.

Questionnaire innovations introduced in the 1992 SPPA impacted the overall findings. Most important are the inclusions of questions on modern, folk, and tap dancing, writing, and composition of music and dance. About 1.5 million adults had either some of their creative writing published or their musical compositions played in public --almost as many as had performed jazz or classical music.

TABLE 1

## ATTENDANCE AT ARTS EVENTS: 1982 - 1992

At Least Once In Last 12 Months	Percentage of Adult Population Attending			Number of Adults Attending (in millions)**		Percentage Increase
	1982	1992	Change from 1982 to 1992	1982	1992	
<u>Attended:</u>						
Jazz Performance	9.6%	10.6%	+1.0%	15.7	19.7	25.5%
Classical Music	13.0	12.5	-0.5	21.3	23.2	8.9
Opera Performances	3.0	3.3	+0.3	4.5	6.1	35.6
Musicals	18.6	17.4	-1.2	30.5	32.3	5.9
Plays	11.9	13.5	+1.6	19.5	25.1	28.7
Ballet	4.2	4.7	+0.5	6.9	8.7	26.1
Art Museums	22.1	26.7	+4.6*	36.2	49.6	37.0
<u>Literature:</u>						
Books Read	56.9	54.0	-2.9*	93.3	100.3	7.3
<u>Visited:</u>						
Historic Parks	39.0	34.5	-4.5*	60.6	64.1	5.8
Art/Craft Fairs	39.0	40.7	+1.7	63.9	75.6	18.3

\* indicates that the rates of change are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

\*\* The number of attenders was computed by multiplying the attendance rate by the U.S. population, 18 years of age and over, 185.8 million in 1992 and 170.6 million in 1982. The population increase from 1982 to 1992 was 9.2%

Note: The sample size for the 1982 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts was 17,254 and for the 1992 survey was 12,736.

TABLE 2

PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS  
VIA BROADCAST AND RECORDED MEDIA: 1982 - 1992

At Least Once In Last 12 Months	Percentage of Adult Population Participating			Number of Adults Participating (in millions)**		
	1982 N=5,683	1992 N=12,736	Change from 1982 to 1992	1982	1992	Percentage Change 1982 to 1992
<u>Jazz</u>						
TV***	18%	21%	+ 3%*	29.6	39.0	32%
Radio	18	28	+10*	30.4	52.0	71
Record	20	21	+ 1	32.4	39.0	20
<u>Classical Music</u>						
TV	25	25	No Change	40.8	46.5	14
Radio	20	31	+11*	36.0	57.6	60
Record	22	24	+ 2	35.6	44.6	25
<u>Opera</u>						
TV	12	12	No Change	20.9	22.3	7
Radio	7	9	+ 2*	11.2	16.7	49
Record	8	7	- 1	12.5	13.0	4
<u>Musicals</u>						
TV	21	15	- 6*	29.8	27.9	-6
Radio	4	4	No Change	8.3	7.4	-11
Record	8	6	- 2*	13.0	11.1	-15
<u>Plays</u>						
TV	26	17	- 9*	36.5	31.6	-13
Radio	4	3	- 1	6.4	5.6	-13
<u>Ballet</u>						
TV	16	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<u>Dance</u>						
TV	NA	19	NA	NA	55.3	NA
<u>Visual Art</u>						
TV	23	32	+ 9*	43.3	59.5	37
<u>Literature</u>						

\* indicates rates of change are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level

\*\* see Table 1

\*\*\* indicates that television and videocassettes have been combined

NA indicates data are not available

**TABLE 3**  
**PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS**  
**VIA PERSONAL PERFORMANCE AND CREATION: 1992**

At Least Once In Last 12 Months	Percentage of Adult Population Participating		Number of Adults Participating (in millions)**	
	Personal	Performed/Displayed Before Public	Personal	Performed/Displayed Before Public
Jazz	1.7%	0.7%	3.2	1.3
Classical Music	4.2	0.9	7.8	1.7
Opera	1.1	0.24	2.0	0.4
Musicals	3.8	0.73	7.1	1.4
Chorale	NA	6.3	NA	11.7
Non-musical Acting+	NA	1.6	NA	3.0
Other Dance	8.1	1.2	15.0	2.2
Ballet	0.2	0.03	0.4	0.1
Writing Creatively	7.4	0.9*	13.7	1.7*

+ indicates a change in question format

\* indicates numbers actually publishing their work

\*\* see Table 1

NA indicates data are not available

Note: The sample size was 12,736