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**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS IN  
REGIONAL AND METROPOLITAN AREAS, 1982-1992**

*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 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), which was commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1992, questioned 12,736 adult Americans about their attendance at seven types of arts events: jazz, classical music, opera, musical plays/opereettas, plays, ballet, and visits to art museums.<sup>1</sup> The results of this survey were used to determine attendance rates for each of the types of arts events studied; these attendance rates were also calculated for the four Census regions (West, South, Northeast, and Midwest) and for three major metropolitan areas (New York, Los Angeles, and Baltimore-Washington).

The terms "attendance" and "participation" are used synonymously in this Research Division Note. The attendance rate is the percentage of the adult population that indicated attending an arts event at least once in the last twelve months divided by the adult population.

This note discusses differences in arts attendance rates across regions and metropolitan areas. It also compares the 1992 results with those of a similar national survey conducted in 1982.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For more information on results from this survey, see Research Division Notes #50, #51, and #52, and Research Division Report #27, Arts Participation in America: 1982-1992.

<sup>2</sup>The SPPA is a supplement to a major Census Bureau survey that is designed as a national survey and not intended to provide detailed statistical information for states or metropolitan areas. Furthermore, due to a revision in the 1992 Census Bureau survey to which the SPPA is a supplement, the metropolitan area information available through the 1992 SPPA is more limited than that from the 1982 SPPA (see Research Division Note #16, cited on the last page of this note). Other sources of information on local arts participation can be found in 12 Local Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts (Research Division Report #26) and A Practical Guide to Arts Participation Research (Research Division Report #30).

The results of the SPPA studies suggest that overall participation in the arts increased during the ten-year period ending in 1992. Like the 1982 SPPA results, the 1992 SPPA showed differing attendance rates by art form in each of the four identified regions. The West continued to have the highest attendance rates and the South the lowest, although the difference narrowed. Arts attendance rates in the three metropolitan areas examined varied significantly by art form. The largest increases in arts participation across the decade occurred in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area.

In interpreting the arts participation results, it is important to remember the distinction between arts attendance rates and total attendance. The latter is determined by multiplying the attendance rate by the population studied.

For example, the opera attendance rate for the 1982 U.S. adult population of 164.6 million was about 3%; that is, approximately 3% of the adult population reported attending opera at least once in the previous twelve months. The total number of people who attended opera during the previous year was therefore about  $(.03)(164,600,000)$ , or 4,938,000. By 1992, the U.S. adult population had increased to 185.8 million, while the attendance rate for opera remained essentially unchanged. Thus, the total audience for opera in 1992 was  $(.03)(185,800,000)$ , or 5,544,000. Although the attendance rate for opera was 3% in both years, 606,000 more people reported attending opera in 1992 than in 1982. Obviously, even when attendance rates change slightly or not at all, the change in the number attending may be considerable.

#### National Statistics

As summarized in Research Division Note #50, 41% of all 1992 SPPA respondents reported attending at least one of the seven benchmark arts activities during the previous year. Art museums experienced a statistically significant<sup>3</sup> attendance rate increase, from 22% in 1982 to 27% in 1992, while three of the other six types of arts events showed slight positive changes in attendance rate during the ten-year period (see Table 1 and Figure 3).

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<sup>3</sup>Statistically significant with a 95% confidence interval.

Jazz, ballet and plays experienced marginal attendance rate increases between 1982 and 1992, but the national rates for classical music and opera remained the same during the decade. Only for musical plays/operettas did the national attendance rate decline slightly, from 19% in 1982 to 17% in 1992.

### Regional Statistics

Attendance rates for each type of arts activity are shown in Table 1 for the four regions (West, Midwest, South, and Northeast).

In 1992, the average attendance rate for the seven identified arts activities was highest in the West. In the West, the rate of those reporting attendance at arts events during the previous year ranged from 4% for opera to 34% for art museums. Western attendance rates for art museums, ballet, and classical music were the highest of any of the regions, and were also higher than the national attendance rates. In fact, Western attendance rates for all seven types of arts events were higher than the equivalent national rates.

Attendance rates for three of the seven types of arts events increased in the West between 1982 and 1992 (see Figures 1 and 2). Rates for opera and jazz remained constant during that period, while the rates for classical music and musical plays/operettas declined slightly from 1982 to 1992.

The next highest attendance rates were found in the Northeast. Attendance rates for classical music, jazz, ballet and art museums were identical to the national rates, while Northeastern rates for opera, musical plays, and plays were higher than the national rates. Small attendance rate increases over the decade were recorded for jazz, plays, and art museums. Rates for classical music, musical plays/operettas, and ballet declined slightly between 1982 and 1992, while the rate for opera remained the same.

In the Midwest, attendance rates for classical music, musical plays, and plays were higher than national rates. The 10% attendance rate for jazz was lower than the 11% national rate, while the Midwestern rates for opera and art museums were identical to the national rates.

Attendance rates for four of the seven types of arts

events remained constant in the Midwest between 1982 and 1992, while rates for plays, musical plays/opereettas, and art museums increased during that period.

The South had the lowest average attendance rate for the seven types of arts events. In both 1982 and 1992, attendance rates for all types of arts events in the South were lower than the national rates, and lower than or equal to the rates of the other regions. However, none of the seven types of arts events experienced attendance rate decreases in the South between 1982 and 1992. In fact, rates for jazz, classical music, plays, ballet and art museums increased during that period.

In the regions, specific trends for each type of arts event are also apparent. In several instances, national trends provide interesting comparisons.

**Jazz** - The regional attendance rate for jazz was highest in the West, although the Western rate of 12% remained constant between 1982 and 1992. The attendance rate was also unchanged in the Midwest, but the Southern and Northeastern rates increased by 1 and 2 percentage points, respectively. These gains allowed the national attendance rate to rise from 10% to 11%.

**Classical Music** - Attendance rates declined in both the Northeast and the West, but increased in the South. The highest 1992 rate was 14%, recorded in the West and the Midwest, while the lowest rate, 11%, was found in the South. Nationally, the attendance rate remained constant at 13%.

**Opera** - The national and regional rates of attendance for opera did not change over the ten-year period. In both 1982 and 1992, opera had the lowest attendance rate of the seven identified types of arts events nationally as well as regionally. The regional attendance rates for opera ranged from 2% in the South to 4% in the West and Northeast.

**Musical Plays/Operettas** - Only for this type of arts event did national attendance rates decline, from 19% in 1982 to 17% in 1992. Regional rates also declined in the West and the Northeast. The highest regional rate in 1992 was 20%, found in both the Midwest and the Northeast. The lowest regional rate was 14%, recorded in the South in both 1982 and 1992.

**Plays** - Attendance rates for plays increased nationally and in all four regions. The highest

regional rate was 16%, noted in the Northeast; the lowest was 11% in the South.

**Ballet** - Attendance rates for ballet increased slightly in the West and the South, as they did nationally. The rate remained constant in the Midwest and declined in the Northeast, from 6% in 1982 to 5% in 1992. The highest regional rate for ballet was 7% in the West.

**Art Museums** - Art museums, like plays, experienced rate increases nationally and in all regions. In both 1982 and 1992, art museums had the highest of all measured attendance rates. The highest rate was 34% in the West; the lowest was 23% in the South.

### Metropolitan Area Statistics

For reasons cited in footnote 2 on page 1 of this note, the 1992 SPPA obtained information for only three metropolitan areas: Los Angeles, New York<sup>4</sup>, and Baltimore-Washington.

**Los Angeles** experienced attendance rate increases for all seven types of arts events (Figure 4). In 1992, Los Angeles attendance rates for all seven types of arts events were higher than the equivalent national rates. Furthermore, Los Angeles 1992 attendance rates for ballet and opera were the highest of the three metropolitan areas surveyed.

**New York City (combined)** experienced a significant decrease for musical plays/operettas and slight decreases for every other activity (Figure 5). The only attendance rate increase was for art museums, which rose from 26% in 1982 to 30% in 1992. Musical plays/operettas experienced the greatest attendance rate decline, from 31% in 1982 to 24% in 1992.

Likewise, in New York City proper, only jazz and art museums realized modest rate increases; attendance rates for all other types of arts events decreased between 1982 and 1992. As in New York City (combined), the most significant rate drop in New York City proper was for musical plays/operettas, from 32% in 1982 to 21% in 1992; the second largest was for plays, from 23% in 1982 to 18% in 1992.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Both for the New York metropolitan area (combined) and separately for the central city (five boroughs) and the suburbs.

<sup>5</sup>It should be noted that the decline in participation in musical theater and plays in New York between 1982 and 1992 is consistent with data reported by the League of American Theatres and Producers, Inc., on attendance trends for Broadway theaters. The League reports a decline of 27% in attendance (tickets sold) at Broadway plays and musicals from the 1981-82 season to the 1991-92 season. The SPPA results in Table 2 indicate 29% and

Even though attendance rates in New York City proper declined for five of the seven types of arts events, the city's 1982 and 1992 attendance rates for all seven types of events remained higher than the equivalent national rates for those years.

Notably, in 1982 New York City proper had the highest attendance rates for six of the seven types of arts events. Attendance rates declined or remained steady in the city during the next ten years, while rates in other metropolitan areas increased. By 1992, only for opera did New York City proper have the highest attendance rate of all surveyed metropolitan areas.

New York City suburbs experienced attendance rate declines for all types of arts events except art museums, whose rate rose from 25% to 30%. 1992 suburban attendance rates remained lower than the equivalent city rates for all types of arts events except art museums and musical plays/operettas.

Between 1982 and 1992, **Baltimore-Washington** experienced considerable attendance rate increases for almost every type of arts event (Figure 6). Attendance rates for jazz and opera doubled, while the rate for classical music rose from 14% to 22%. The only exception was the attendance rate for ballet, which fell from 7% to 6%. Baltimore-Washington's 1992 attendance rates for four of the seven types of arts events were the highest of any of the metropolitan areas studied. Furthermore, Baltimore-Washington's rates exceeded the national rates for all seven types of arts events.

In the metropolitan areas, as in the regions, specific participation trends for each type of arts event can be detected.

**Jazz** - The highest 1992 attendance rate was recorded in Baltimore-Washington, where the rate increased from 9% in 1982 to 18% in 1992. Only in the New York suburbs did the attendance rate decline, from 9% in 1982 to 7% in 1992.

**Classical Music** - Between 1982 and 1992, attendance rates increased in Los Angeles and Baltimore-Washington; the highest 1992 rate was Baltimore-Washington's 22%. The lowest metropolitan rate for classical music was 11%, observed in the New York suburbs.

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18% declines, respectively, in participation rates for musicals and plays for New York (combined), and 34% and 28% declines in New York City.

**Opera** - The attendance rate for Baltimore-Washington doubled during the ten year period from 3% to 6%, while the rate for Los Angeles increased from 4% to 7%. Although attendance rates in New York declined, the highest 1992 attendance rate, 8%, was noted in New York City proper.

**Musical Plays/Operettas** - Although the national attendance rate decreased between 1982 and 1992, the rates in Baltimore-Washington and Los Angeles rose modestly during that period. The highest 1992 attendance rate was 30% in Baltimore-Washington; the lowest was 21% in New York City proper.

**Plays** - As with jazz, classical music, musical plays/operettas, and opera, attendance rates increased in Los Angeles and Baltimore-Washington but dropped in New York. The highest rate was 21%, noted in both Los Angeles and Baltimore-Washington; the lowest was 16% in the New York suburbs.

**Ballet** - Attendance rates for ballet declined in every metropolitan area except Los Angeles, where the highest attendance rate, 9%, was recorded. The lowest rate was 3% in the New York suburbs, down from 6% in 1982.

**Art Museums** - Art museums had the highest attendance rate of all seven types of arts events surveyed in both 1982 and 1992. Furthermore, attendance rates increased in all three metropolitan areas and all four regional areas studied. The highest 1992 attendance rate was 47% in Baltimore-Washington; the lowest was 29% in New York city proper.

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Research Division Note # 16 - May 27, 1986 compares arts participation in urban/rural places and metropolitan areas based on the results of the 1982 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. For further information on the 1992 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts and survey results refer to Arts Participation in America: 1982-1992, October 1993, National Endowment for the Arts, Research Division Report #27. Copies available on request from the Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Rm 617, Washington, D.C. 20506 (202) 682-5432 (tel.) / (202) 682-5528 (fax).

Table 1

## ATTENDANCE RATES FOR SELECTED ARTS EVENTS BY REGION 1982-1992

	Number of Persons 18+ Years* (in thousands)	Sample Size	Jazz	Classical Music	Opera	Musical Plays	Plays	Ballet	Art Museums
<b>National</b>									
1992	185,800	12,700	11	13	3	17	14	5	27
1982	164,600	17,300	10	13	3	19	12	4	22
<b>West</b>									
1992	36,000	2,400	12	14	4	18	15	7	34
1982	31,600	3,300	12	16	4	22	14	5	29
<b>Midwest</b>									
1992	42,000	3,000	10	14	3	20	15	4	27
1982	42,500	4,500	10	14	3	18	12	4	21
<b>South</b>									
1992	67,400	4,600	10	11	2	14	11	4	23
1982	52,800	5,500	9	10	2	14	9	3	19
<b>Northeast</b>									
1992	40,400	2,700	11	13	4	20	16	5	27
1982	37,700	4,000	9	14	4	23	14	6	22

\*The 1980 and 1990 Census of Population data are shown for the regions. The full adult population data are for 1982 and 1992, the years of the surveys.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts.

Research Division  
National Endowment for the Arts  
March 1995

Table 2

## ATTENDANCE RATES FOR SELECTED ARTS EVENTS IN THREE METROPOLITAN AREAS 1982-1992

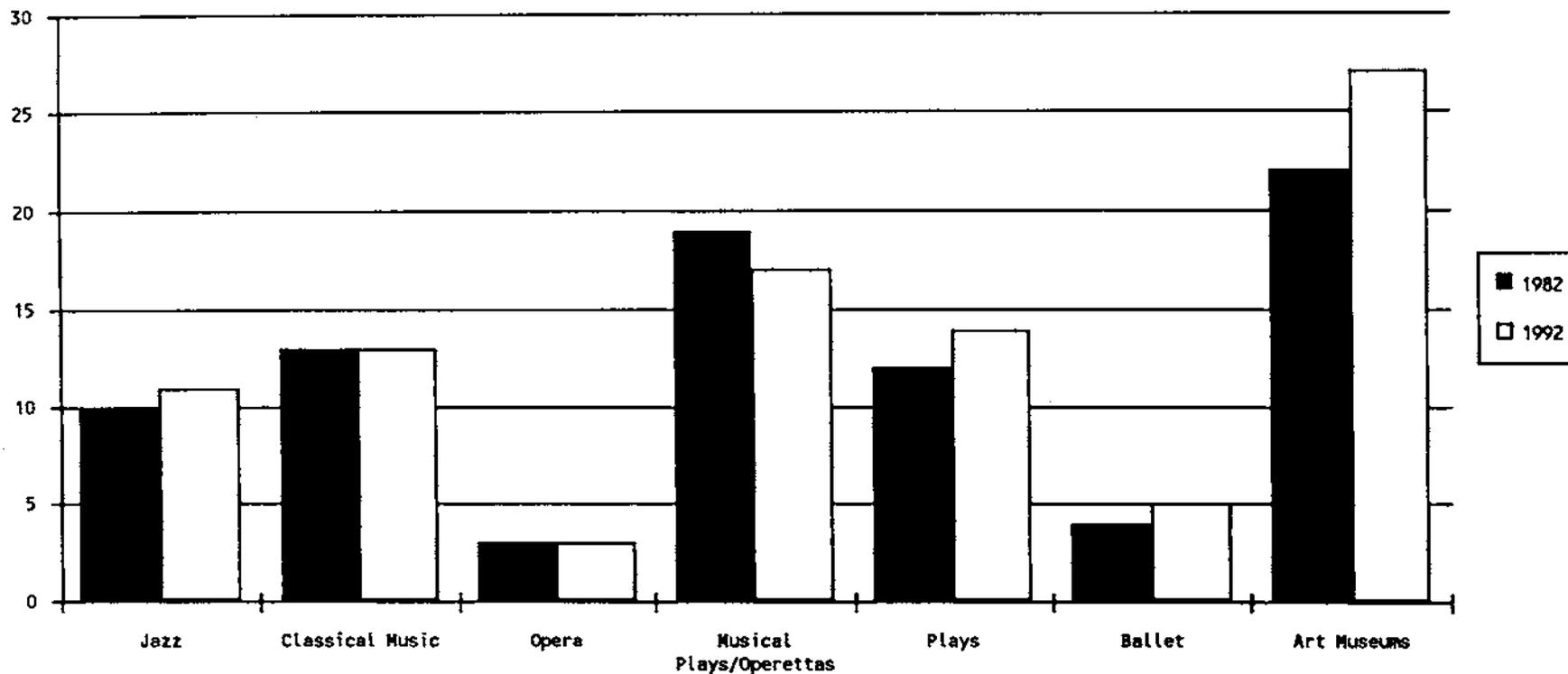
	Number of Persons 18+ Years* (in thousands)	Sample Size	Jazz	Classical Music	Opera	Musical Plays	Plays	Ballet	Art Museums
<b>National</b>									
1992	185,800	12,700	11	13	3	17	14	5	27
1982	164,600	17,300	10	13	3	19	12	4	22
<b>Los Angeles</b>									
1992	10,550	600	14	17	7	25	21	9	37
1982	8,350	900	11	13	4	24	15	5	25
<b>New York (combined)</b>									
1992	11,100	1,150	10	13	6	24	17	5	30
1982	12,950	1,150	10	14	7	31	20	8	26
<b>New York (city)</b>									
1992	5,400	500	13	14	8	21	18	8	29
1982	6,200	450	12	15	10	32	23	11	28
<b>New York (suburbs)</b>									
1992	5,700	650	7	11	4	25	16	3	30
1982	6,750	700	9	13	5	29	19	6	25
<b>Baltimore/Washington</b>									
1992	4,550	450	18	22	6	30	21	6	47
1982	3,950	400	9	14	3	26	16	7	34

\*The 1980 and 1990 Census of Population data are shown for the metropolitan areas. The full adult population data are for 1982 and 1992, the years of the surveys.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts.

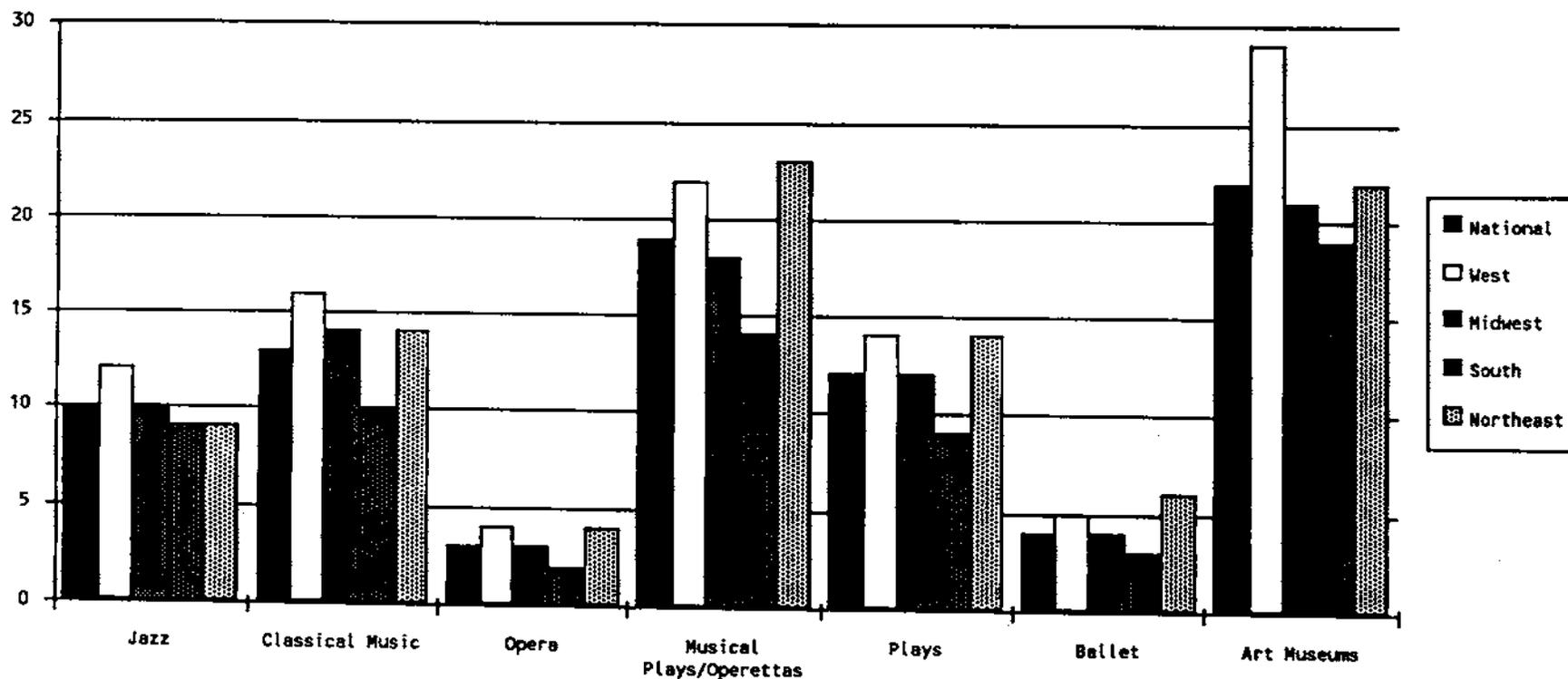
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**Figure 1: National Attendance Rates for Selected Arts Events  
1982-1992**



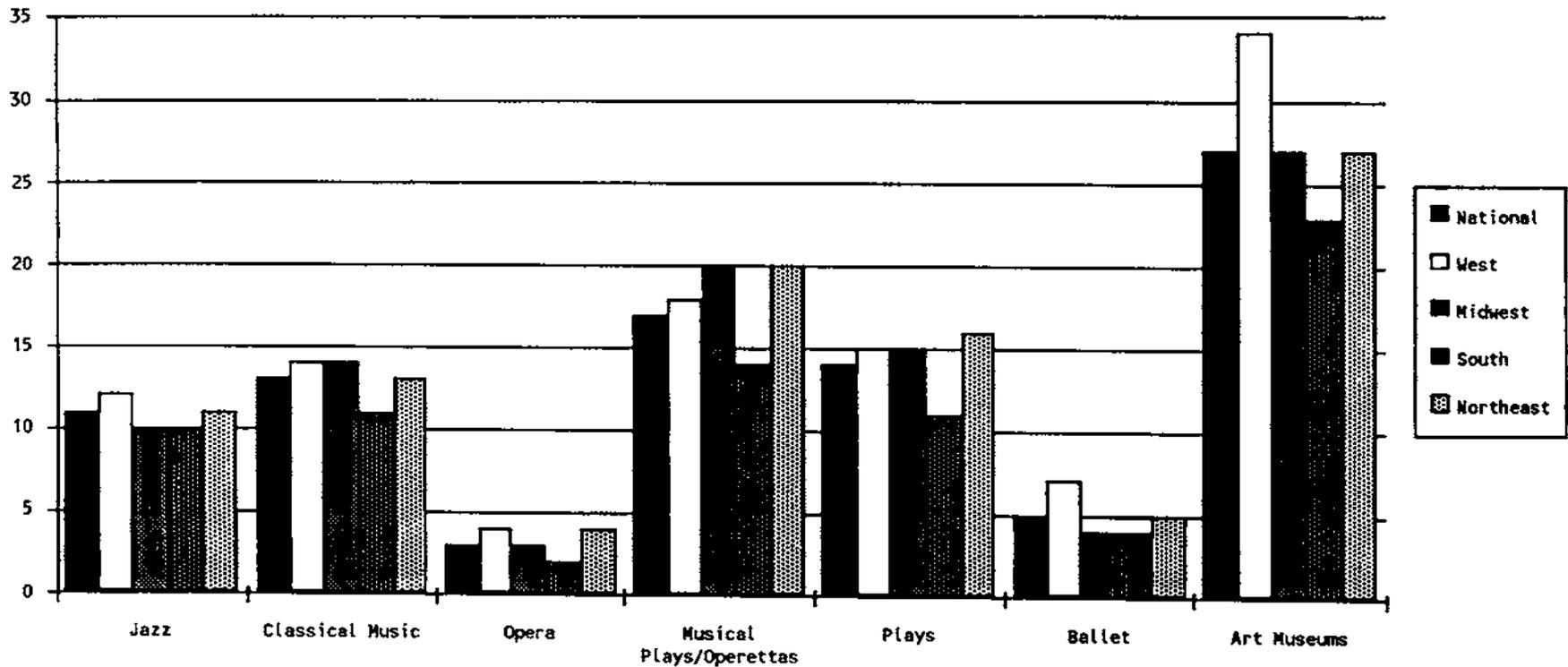
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts  
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**Figure 2: Regional Attendance Rates for Selected Arts Events  
1982**



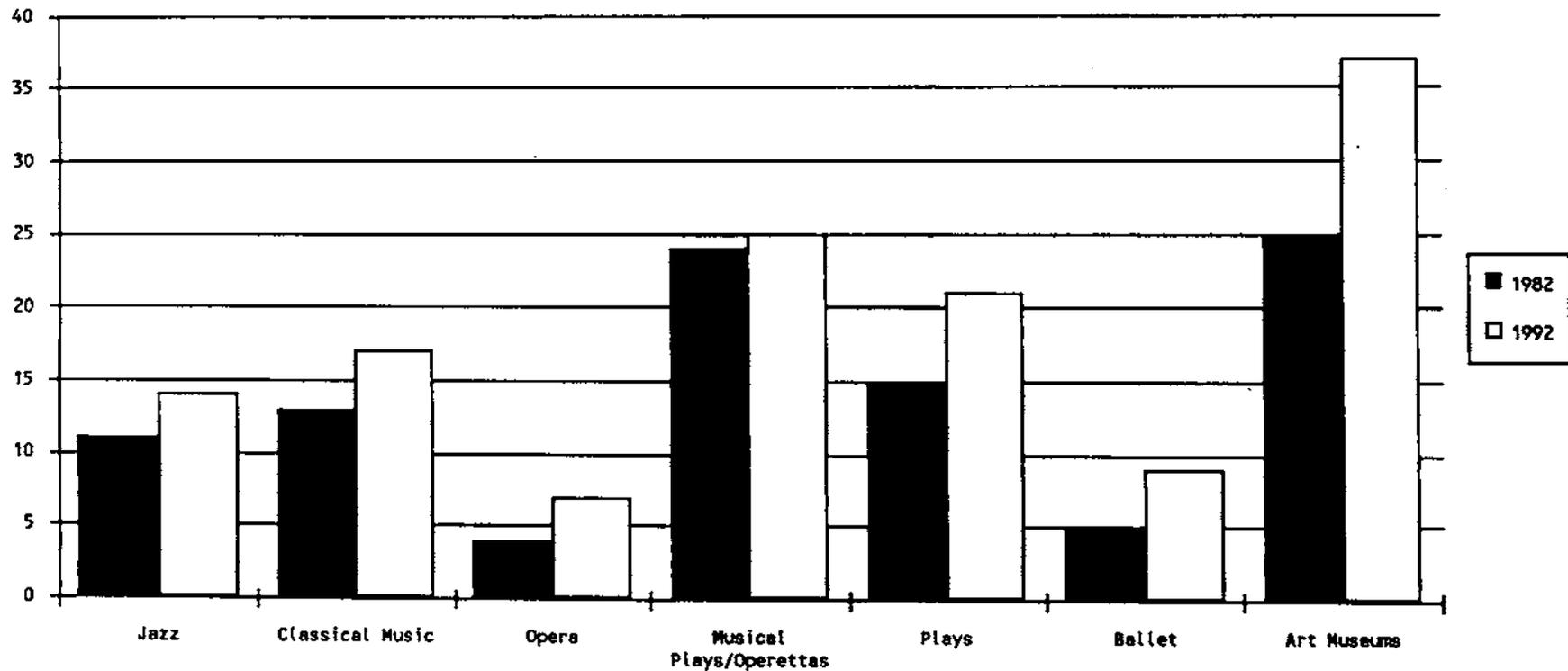
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts  
Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts March 1995

**Figure 3: Regional Attendance Rates for Selected Arts Events  
1992**



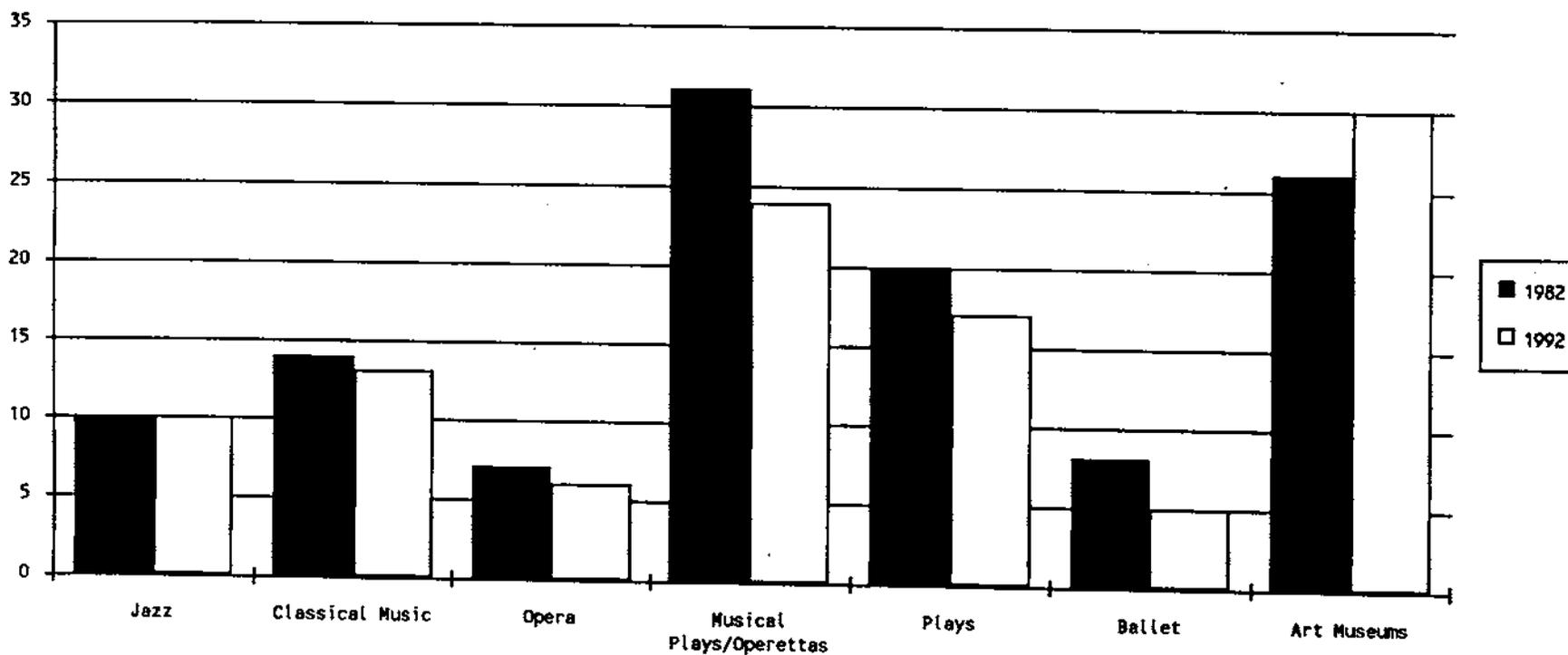
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts  
Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts March 1995

**Figure 4: Los Angeles Attendance Rates for Selected Arts Events  
1982-1992**



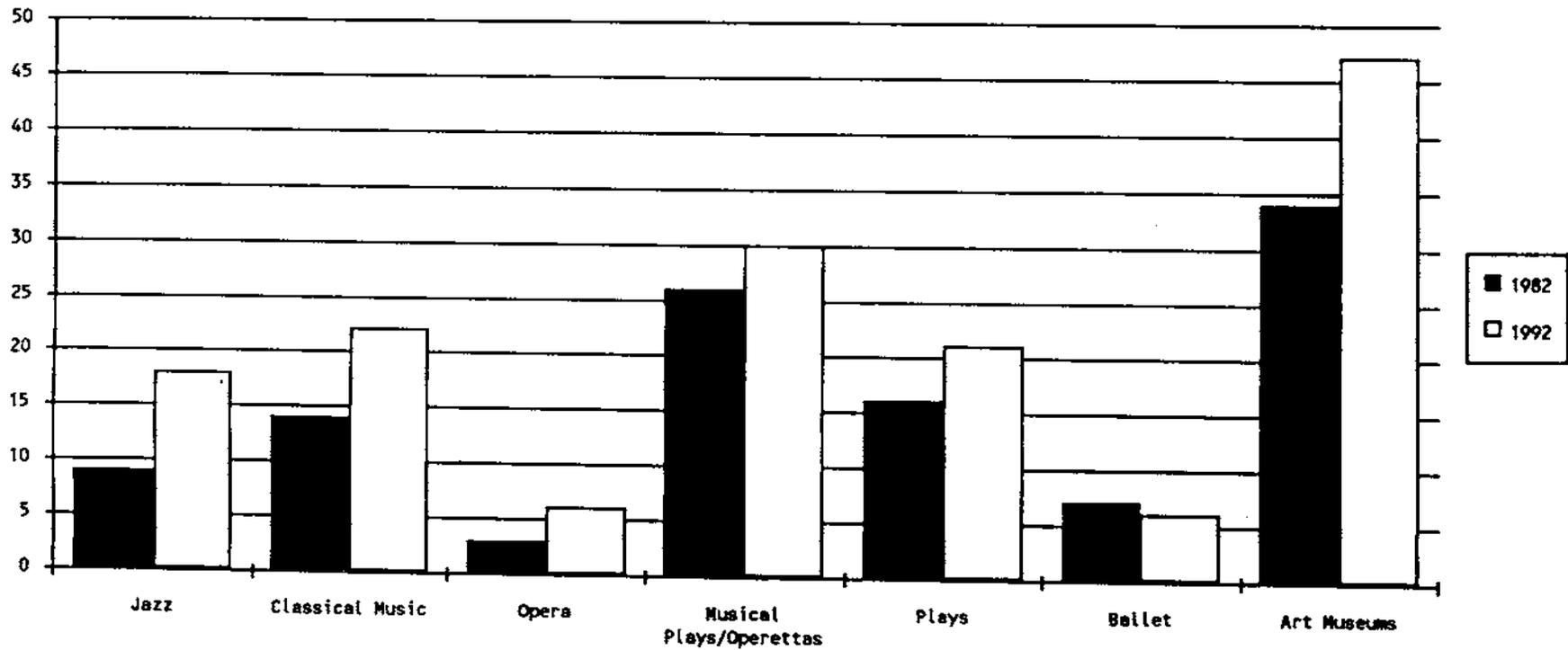
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts  
Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts March 1995

**Figure 5: New York City (combined) Attendance Rates for Selected Arts Events 1982-1992**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts  
 Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts March 1995

**Figure 6: Baltimore-Washington Attendance Rates for Selected Arts Events 1982-1992**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1982 and 1992 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts  
 Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts March 1995