

# A Decade of General Social Survey (GSS) Data on Arts Participation

A Historical Guide to the GSS Arts Module 2012-2022

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# Executive Summary

This report builds on previous research findings from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The study, like two previous NEA reports (in 2013 and 2020), analyzes General Social Survey (GSS) data about attending performing arts events in person and visiting art museums, galleries, and exhibits showcasing paintings, sculpture, textiles, graphic design, or photography.

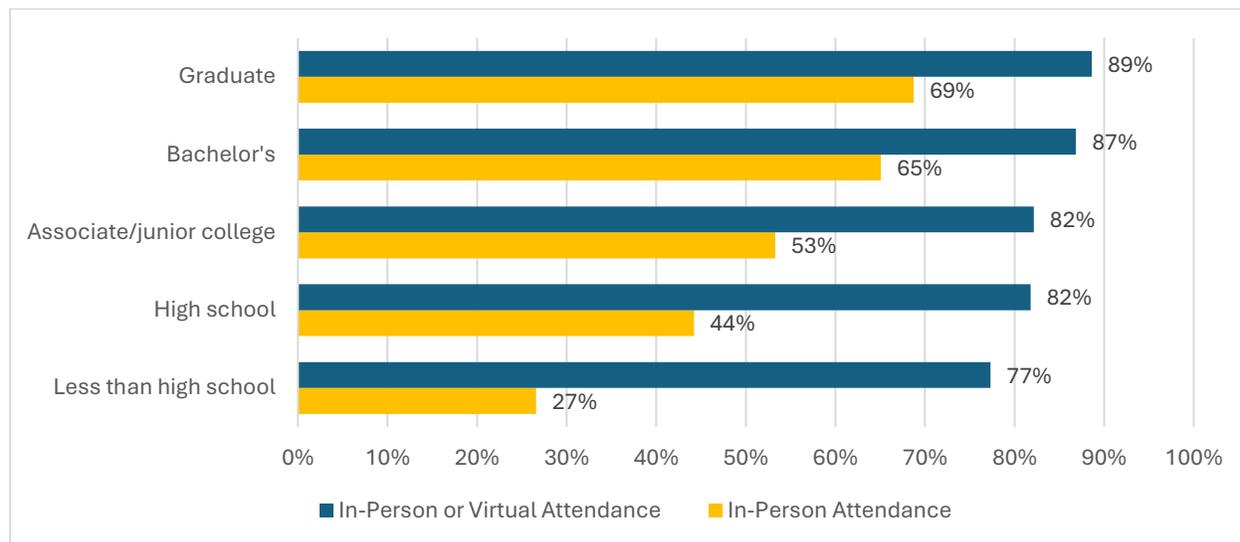
For the present report, the data source is the arts module of the 2022 GSS. In 2023, the NEA released *Online Audiences for Arts Programming: A Survey of Virtual Participation Amid COVID-19*, a research brief that mined the 2022 GSS results for insights about online engagement with arts activities during the pandemic.

Apart from the NEA's periodic use of GSS data to examine patterns of arts participation in the United States, the agency historically has conducted surveys—in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau—to measure the public's engagement with a wide breadth of arts activities. (Note: Because of key methodological differences between the Census Bureau surveys and the GSS Arts module instrument, discrepancies are bound to emerge when results from both data sources are reviewed together.)

According to the 2022 GSS data:

- **In 2022, half of all adults (50 percent) attended at least one performing arts event in person.**
  - This percentage marks a 9-point increase from the reported 2016 level. The growth appears to have been driven largely by women, Hispanics, and adults who received only a high school diploma.
  - There are few differences in performing arts attendance between 2012 and 2022, though the general trend shows increases across groups.
- **Eighty-three percent of adults reported attending arts performances either in person or by viewing or listening to livestreamed or archived web events.**
  - Adults with less than a high school education reported a low rate of attending performing arts events in person—only 27 percent. However, at 77 percent, their rate of attending in any format (whether in-person or virtually) was comparable with the rates of adults at other education levels (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Percentage of Survey Respondents by Education Level Who Attended Performing Arts Events—Whether In-Person or Virtually: 2022**



- **Roughly 32 percent of adults consistently reported attending in-person art exhibits in all survey years** under review: 2012, 2016, and 2022.
  - Only those with graduate degrees saw significant shifts across the 10-year range seeing a 10-percentage point increase between 2012 and 2016, but a 25-percentage point drop from 2016 to 2022.
- **Forty-four percent of adults reported either attending in-person art exhibits or participating in online art tours in 2022.**
- Fifty-eight percent of adults read novels or poetry in 2022, but **66 percent read works in either of these genres or viewed or listened to livestreamed or web-archived reading events.**
- In 2022, **28 percent of adults reported creating or performing art.** Females and adults younger than 35 years were among those most likely to do so.
- **Twenty-seven percent of adults took online classes or lessons in the arts**—with females and Blacks doing so at the highest rates.
- **The share of adults going to the movies in 2022 (54 percent)** was roughly comparable to the proportion who attended performing arts events in person.

In brief, the 2022 GSS results for arts and cultural participation suggest that virtual offerings (i.e., livestreamed or archived web events and online art tours) allowed most Americans to participate in visual, performing and literary arts events—whether or not they also did so in person. Overall, we see growth in attendance and participation from earlier years for multiple groups despite the impacts of the pandemic. Further, in keeping with the most recent results

from the NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, the 2022 GSS shows roughly half of the U.S. adult population attending performing arts in-person.

# Introduction

This report supports and expands upon findings from earlier National Endowment for the Arts reports *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* (2015), *Why We Engage: Attending, Creating, and Performing Art* (2020), and *Online Audiences for Arts Programming: A Survey of Virtual Participation Amid COVID-19* (2023).

This report examines data from the 2012, 2016, and 2022 waves of the General Social Survey (GSS) Arts topical module to understand the motivation and barriers that affect arts attendance and overall participation and how these patterns have changed over time.

The NEA, in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau, also produces the Survey on Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) at regular intervals. These two surveys—the GSS and SPPA—collect somewhat different data about United States arts activities. For example, while both surveys ask Americans about their motivations for participating in the arts, only the GSS collects information about perceived barriers to participation. As described below, the 2022 GSS Arts module also asked respondents to characterize their levels of arts participation activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## General Social Survey

The General Social Survey (GSS) is a nationally representative survey of the adult<sup>1</sup> population in the United States commissioned by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and administered by NORC at the University of Chicago and conducted since 1972. The GSS has been conducted biennially since 1994 and has served as a high-quality source of data providing a representative, repeated cross-sectional snapshot. From 1972 to 2018, the GSS questionnaire was most often administered through an in-person interview, supplemented as needed with phone interviews. In 2021, the GSS introduced a web questionnaire as part of data collection. The 2022 GSS included both the web questionnaire and in-person as the primary modes of data collection, continuing to supplement with phone interviews.

The GSS features a core set of questions related to the behaviors and attitudes of Americans on a variety of social topics and issues along with demographic items. Additional topic area modules are fielded from year-to-year allowing for a snapshot of public opinion on timely and emerging topics. Repeated modules allow for measuring these opinion trends over time.

The GSS Arts module (also known as the Arts and Culture topical module<sup>2</sup>) is a co-funded creation of the National Endowment for the Arts and the GSS to collect data on arts attendance and people’s motivations for and barriers to attendance. The GSS Arts module has been conducted three times: 2012, 2016, and 2022.

Each instance of the module was conducted through a different data collection approach utilized by the GSS. The 2012 GSS Arts module was conducted as part of the 2012 wave of the 2006-2014 GSS Panel asked of 2008 and 2010 panelists. The 2016 GSS Arts module was

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<sup>1</sup> Non-institutionalized individuals aged 18 and older who speak English or Spanish

<sup>2</sup> An earlier version of the Arts and Culture module was previously fielded in 1993, 1998, and 2002. We use the term “GSS Arts module” here to distinguish from the previous module.

conducted as a part of the main 2016 GSS survey. The 2022 GSS Arts module was conducted as an independent, follow-on study from the main 2022 GSS survey inviting eligible respondents to complete an additional survey. Additional details regarding changes in the data collection methodology over time are discussed in the [Appendix](#).

The 2012 GSS Arts module collected data about arts attendance and about the motivations for and barriers to attendance. After answering questions about attending art performances and exhibits in the past year, respondents were asked follow-up questions about attending a particular type of event (either art performance or art exhibits). Respondents were also asked about a number of potential motivations for attendance, which they were asked to rate as major, minor, or non-existent. Additional questions were asked about perceived barriers to arts attendance. For respondents who did not attend an arts event, they were asked to identify the most important for non-attendance. The 2016 module questionnaire was identical to the 2012 questionnaire. Those interested in these important questions should review *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* and *Why We Engage: Attending, Creating, and Performing Art*.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic required the 2022 module content to pivot to measure post-pandemic operations and capture forms of arts participation outside of in-person performance and exhibition attendance (e.g., online or recorded performances). Questions on motivations and barriers to participation were replaced with questions asking whether respondents had engaged with various forms of arts attendance at less, similar, or higher rates than during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two key items asked across all three years of the GSS Arts module concerned performing arts and art exhibit attendance. However, the 2022 question added the clarifying phrase “in person” to distinguish between arts participation in an in-person and an online setting. Conceptually, GSS staff believe the instrument tried to measure the same construct while providing necessary context, given restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

Given differences in the data collection design across the three waves of the GSS Arts module, the analyses in this report rely on the use of post-stratification weights to have the sample match the population. Post-stratification weights use high-quality information for the population (i.e., the annual American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau) to align survey estimates with population information (e.g., demographic characteristics like gender, age, and race). This type of weighting adjustment is helpful in adjusting for nonresponse and for improving representativeness with respect to the selected demographic characteristics. In other words, post-stratification weights help the data better represent the population. Using post-stratification weights is recommended for analysis of any GSS data.<sup>4</sup>

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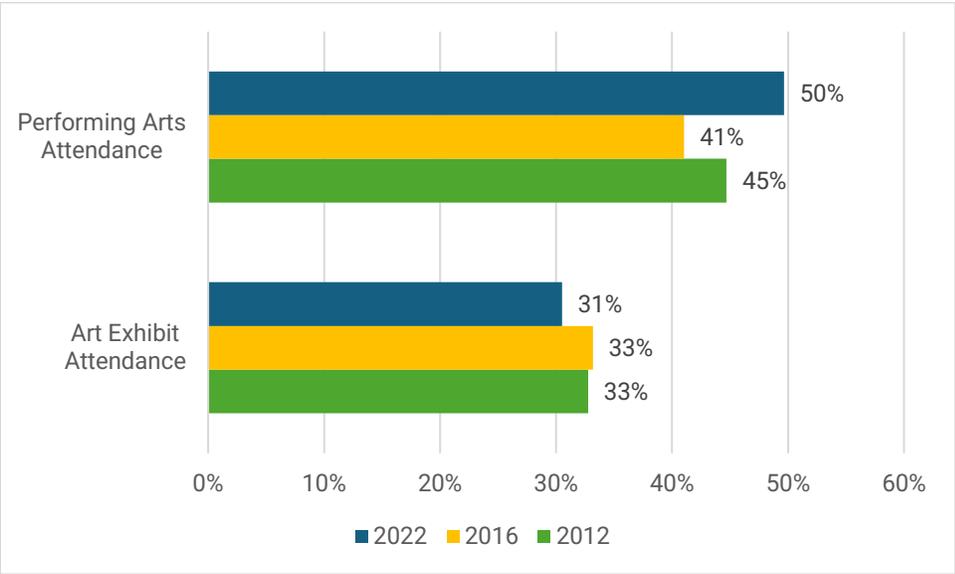
<sup>3</sup> Specific differences in question wording are provided in the [Appendix](#).

<sup>4</sup> More details regarding GSS weighting are provided in the [Appendix](#).

# Performing Arts and Art Exhibit Attendance

Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on many in-person activities, there was no measurable decrease in art attendance activities in 2022 compared to pre-pandemic years. While there was a significant decline in performing arts attendance measured between 2012 and 2016, the increase in performing arts attendance following the initial years of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant surge in performing arts attendance—with half of respondents attending a live music, theater, or dance performance in person (see Figure 2). Unlike performing arts attendance, art exhibit attendance did not see a significant change across the years.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended a Performing Arts Event or Art Exhibit in Person: 2012-2022**



The rise in performing arts attendance is partially driven by female respondents, with 53 percent reporting attendance in 2022—a figure that significantly exceeded both the 2012 (44 percent) and 2016 (40 percent) reported rates of attendance (see Table 1). However, differences in performing arts attendance between males and females were not observed across all three years. Hispanic attendance to the performing arts saw a significant decrease from 2012 (36 percent of Hispanic adults) to 2016 (24 percent) but saw a large gain from 2016 to 2022 (50 percent). Education has continuously been a key divider in performing arts attendance, with adults who have higher education levels attending at significantly greater rates than less educated adults. High school graduates with no college degrees reported a bump in attendance from 2016 (34 percent) to 2022 (44 percent).

**Table 1. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Performing Arts in Person, by Demographic Characteristics: 2012-2022**

	2012	2016	2022	Percentage point (pp) change		
				2012-2016	2016-2022	2012-2022
Overall	45%	41%	50%	-4 pp	9 pp <sup>†</sup>	5 pp
Male	46%	42%	46%	-4 pp	4 pp	0 pp
Female	44%	40%	53%	-4 pp	13 pp <sup>†</sup>	9 pp <sup>†</sup>
Age 18-24	56%	39%	58%	-17 pp <sup>†</sup>	19 pp	2 pp
Age 25-34	45%	44%	56%	-1 pp	12 pp	11 pp
Age 35-44	47%	46%	48%	-1 pp	2 pp	1 pp
Age 45-54	45%	38%	40%	-7 pp	2 pp	-5 pp
Age 55-64	43%	41%	55%	-2 pp	14 pp	12 pp
Age 65+	41%	38%	43%	-3 pp	5 pp	2 pp
Hispanic	36% <sup>†</sup>	24% <sup>†</sup>	50%	-12 pp <sup>†</sup>	26 pp <sup>†</sup>	14 pp
Non-Hispanic Black	38% <sup>†</sup>	28% <sup>†</sup>	33%	-10 pp <sup>†</sup>	5 pp	-5 pp
Non-Hispanic Other	40% <sup>†</sup>	41% <sup>†</sup>	59%	1 pp	18 pp	19 pp
Non-Hispanic White	48% <sup>†</sup>	47% <sup>†</sup>	52%	-1 pp	5 pp	4 pp
Less than high school	18% <sup>†</sup>	15% <sup>†</sup>	27% <sup>!†</sup>	-3 pp	12 pp	9 pp
High school	39% <sup>†</sup>	34% <sup>†</sup>	44% <sup>†</sup>	-5 pp <sup>†</sup>	10 pp <sup>†</sup>	5 pp
Associate/junior college	45% <sup>†</sup>	50% <sup>†</sup>	53% <sup>†</sup>	5 pp	3 pp	8 pp
Bachelor's	68% <sup>†</sup>	61% <sup>†</sup>	65% <sup>†</sup>	-7 pp	4 pp	-3 pp
Graduate	66% <sup>†</sup>	69% <sup>†</sup>	69% <sup>†</sup>	3 pp	0 pp	3 pp

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. <sup>!</sup> Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

Art exhibit attendance has seen little change from 2012 to 2022 across all the examined demographic groups (see Table 2). Only graduate degree-holders, who surged in art exhibit attendance between 2012 (57 percent) and 2016 (67 percent), saw significant declines in 2022 (42 percent). As with performing arts attendance, art exhibit attendance rates differed sharply by race/ethnicity and education level. Specifically, Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black respondents reported lower rates of attendance than did non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic “other race” respondents,<sup>5</sup> just as adults with more education reported higher rates of attendance than did less-educated adults.

<sup>5</sup> All references to Black, White, or other race respondents in this brief exclude Hispanic populations.

**Table 2. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Art Exhibits in Person, by Demographic Characteristics: 2012-2022**

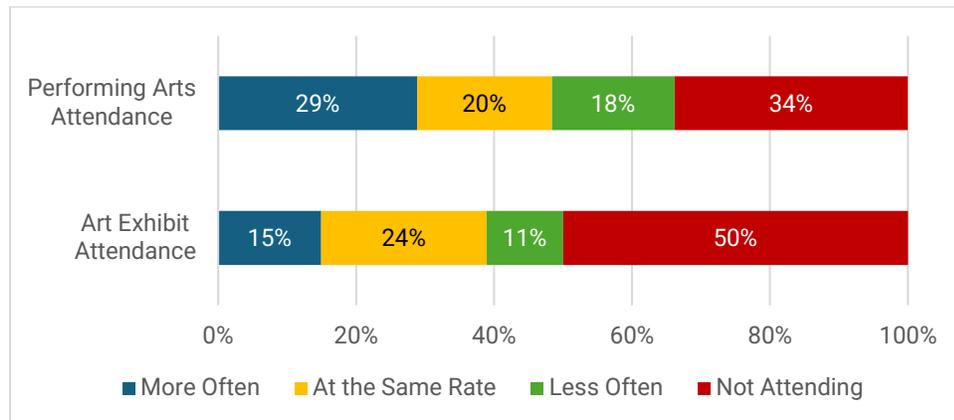
	2012	2016	2022	Percentage point (pp) change		
				2012-2016	2016-2022	2012-2022
Overall	33%	33%	31%	0 pp	-2 pp	-2 pp
Male	34%	34%	28%	0 pp	-6 pp	-6 pp
Female	32%	33%	33%	1 pp	0 pp	1 pp
Age 18-24	32%	38%	41%	6 pp	3 pp	9 pp
Age 25-34	34%	35%	32%	1 pp	-3 pp	-2 pp
Age 35-44	32%	31%	26%	-1 pp	-5 pp	-6 pp
Age 45-54	31%	30%	26%	-1 pp	-4 pp	-5 pp
Age 55-64	35%	34%	31%	-1 pp	-3 pp	-4 pp
Age 65+	32%	33%	29%	1 pp	-4 pp	-3 pp
Hispanic	29% <sup>†</sup>	20% <sup>†</sup>	19% <sup>†</sup>	-9 pp	-1 pp	-10 pp
Non-Hispanic Black	21% <sup>†</sup>	19% <sup>†</sup>	19% <sup>!†</sup>	-2 pp	0 pp	-2 pp
Non-Hispanic Other	33% <sup>†</sup>	37% <sup>†</sup>	45% <sup>†</sup>	4 pp	8 pp	12 pp
Non-Hispanic White	35% <sup>†</sup>	38% <sup>†</sup>	34% <sup>†</sup>	3 pp	-4 pp	-1 pp
Less than high school	10% <sup>†</sup>	12% <sup>†</sup>	14% <sup>!†</sup>	2 pp	2 pp	4 pp
High school	26% <sup>†</sup>	24% <sup>†</sup>	26% <sup>†</sup>	-2 pp	2 pp	0 pp
Associate/junior college	37% <sup>†</sup>	44% <sup>†</sup>	28% <sup>†</sup>	7 pp	-16 pp	-9 pp
Bachelor's	52% <sup>†</sup>	50% <sup>†</sup>	47% <sup>†</sup>	-2 pp	-3 pp	-5 pp
Graduate	57% <sup>†</sup>	67% <sup>†</sup>	42% <sup>†</sup>	10 pp <sup>†</sup>	-25 pp <sup>†</sup>	-15 pp

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. <sup>!</sup> Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

## Post-Pandemic Attendance

The 2022 GSS Arts module asked adults if they were more or less likely to attend visual and performing arts events than during the first year of the pandemic (2020). Respondents were twice as likely to say they were more frequently attending performing arts events (29 percent of adults) than to report they were more frequently attending art exhibits (15 percent of adults) (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Performing Arts or Art Exhibits More or Less Often than in the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic: 2022**



Blacks were slower than other racial/ethnic groups to return to the performing arts: only 13 percent of Black respondents reported going more often in 2021-2022 than the first year of the pandemic (compared to 30 percent of White respondents). Meanwhile, only 7 percent of Black respondents reported attending performing arts events at the same rate as during the first year of the pandemic (compared to 23 percent of White respondents) (see Table 3). Adults who did not graduate from high school, or whose education stopped with high school graduation, saw a slower return to the performing arts than their college-educated peers.

**Table 3. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Performing Arts More or Less Often than in the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

	More Often	At the Same Rate	Less Often	Not Attending
Overall	29%	20%	18%	34%
Male	23%	21%	18%	39%
Female	35%	19%	18%	29%
Age 18-24	34%	18% <sup>!</sup>	28% <sup>!</sup>	20% <sup>!</sup>
Age 25-34	36%	27%	17% <sup>!</sup>	20%
Age 35-44	24%	18% <sup>!</sup>	24%	35%
Age 45-54	34%	18% <sup>!</sup>	15% <sup>!</sup>	33%
Age 55-64	22%	23%	13%	42%
Age 65+	26%	14%	13%	47%
Hispanic <sup>†</sup>	30%	15%	25%	30%
Non-Hispanic Black <sup>†</sup>	13% <sup>!</sup>	7% <sup>!</sup>	17% <sup>!</sup>	63%
Non-Hispanic Other <sup>†</sup>	-	-	-	-
Non-Hispanic White <sup>†</sup>	30%	23%	15%	32%

Less than high school <sup>†</sup>	14% <sup>!</sup>	6% <sup>!</sup>	24% <sup>!</sup>	55%
High school <sup>†</sup>	23%	21%	18%	39%
Associate/junior college <sup>†</sup>	25%	26%	17% <sup>!</sup>	32%
Bachelor's <sup>†</sup>	44%	26%	12%	17%
Graduate <sup>†</sup>	49%	14%	19%	18%

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. <sup>!</sup> Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent. Demographic categories which have at least one CV over 50 percent are suppressed.

Race/ethnic groups were more similar in their return to art exhibit attendance (see Table 4). Again, a greater percentage of college graduates attended art exhibits more often (29-30 percent for bachelor's degree and higher holders) than in 2020, relative to those who graduated only from high school (9 percent).

**Table 4. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Art Exhibits More or Less Often than in the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

	More Often	At the Same Rate	Less Often	Not Attending
Overall	15%	24%	11%	50%
Male	11%	26%	11%	52%
Female	18%	23%	11%	48%
Age 18-24	17% <sup>!</sup>	27%	17% <sup>!</sup>	39%
Age 25-34	19%	32%	8% <sup>!</sup>	42%
Age 35-44	16% <sup>!</sup>	15%	14% <sup>!</sup>	55%
Age 45-54	15% <sup>!</sup>	32%	9% <sup>!</sup>	45%
Age 55-64	10%	28%	11%	51%
Age 65+	14%	14%	10% <sup>!</sup>	63%
Hispanic	10% <sup>!</sup>	21%	12% <sup>!</sup>	56%
Non-Hispanic Black	-	-	-	-
Non-Hispanic Other	-	-	-	-
Non-Hispanic White	16%	27%	9%	47%
Less than high school <sup>†</sup>	8% <sup>!</sup>	10% <sup>!</sup>	11% <sup>!</sup>	71%
High school <sup>†</sup>	9%	29%	11%	51%
Associate/junior college <sup>†</sup>	11% <sup>!</sup>	17% <sup>!</sup>	11% <sup>!</sup>	61%
Bachelor's <sup>†</sup>	30%	26%	10% <sup>!</sup>	34%
Graduate <sup>†</sup>	29%	22%	13% <sup>!</sup>	37%

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. <sup>!</sup> Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent. Demographic categories which have at least one CV over 50 percent are suppressed.

## Movie Theater Attendance

The 2022 GSS Arts module also asked about going to the movies. The participation rate for this activity (54 percent of adults doing so in the last year) was comparable to the 50 percent who attended a performing arts event in person (see Table 5). Movie-going saw large differences by sex and age group. Female respondents reported being more likely to have gone to the movies (62 percent) than male respondents (44 percent), while younger respondents were more likely to go to the movies than their older counterparts (age 18-24: 70 percent; age 65+: 34 percent).

**Table 5. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Went to a Movie Theater, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

	<b>Movie Attendance</b>
Overall	54%
Male	44% <sup>†</sup>
Female	62% <sup>†</sup>
Age 18-24	70% <sup>†</sup>
Age 25-34	71% <sup>†</sup>
Age 35-44	60% <sup>†</sup>
Age 45-54	48% <sup>†</sup>
Age 55-64	44% <sup>†</sup>
Age 65+	34% <sup>†</sup>
Hispanic	55%
Non-Hispanic Black	54%
Non-Hispanic Other	82%
Non-Hispanic White	50%
Less than high school	51%
High school	53%
Associate/junior college	44%
Bachelor's	60%
Graduate	57%

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

## In-Person Versus Online Arts Participation

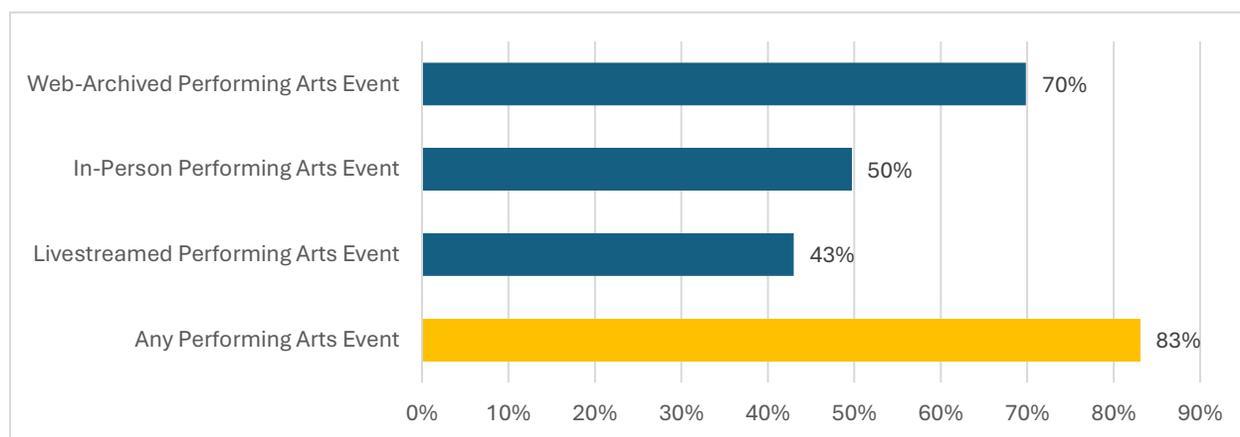
The experience of arts and cultural organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the necessity of finding ways to engage audiences beyond in-person attendance at performances and exhibits. An earlier NEA report, *Online Audiences for Arts Programming: A Survey of Virtual Participation Amid COVID-19*, showed how prevalent these activities were for

much of the nation throughout the pandemic. Here we explore demographic differences between those who attend in-person and virtual arts activities.

## Performing Arts

Despite the rise in attending performing arts events in person from 2016 to 2022, it did not rank as the most frequent mode of arts participation, according to the most recent survey (see Figure 4). Rather, viewing or listening to a web-archived performing arts event was far more common, occupying 70 percent of adults in 2022. By contrast, viewing or listening to a livestreamed performing arts event was the least common form of performing arts attendance (43 percent). Still, an overwhelming 83 percent of adults either attended a performing arts event in person or viewed or listened to a web-archived or livestreamed performing event.

**Figure 4. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended In-Person or Online Performance Arts Events: 2022**



We note many significant demographic differences in performing arts attendance, depending on the mode of engagement (see Table 6). In-person attendance at performing art events differs by education: those with less than a high school diploma attended far less (27 percent) than adults at any other education level, with graduate or professional degree-holders reporting the highest rate of attendance (69 percent).

By contrast, race/ethnicity made a difference among adults viewing or listening to web-archived performing arts events: White respondents did this activity the least (65 percent of them) than another other racial/ethnic group, while the category known as “Other” reported the highest rate (90 percent). Finally, when considering performing arts attendance in any capacity—in-person or virtual—and which group differences arose, age is the most prominent factor. For example, 93 percent of adults under 25 years of age did any type of performing arts attendance, versus 68 percent of those over 65.

**Table 6. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Performing Arts Events, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

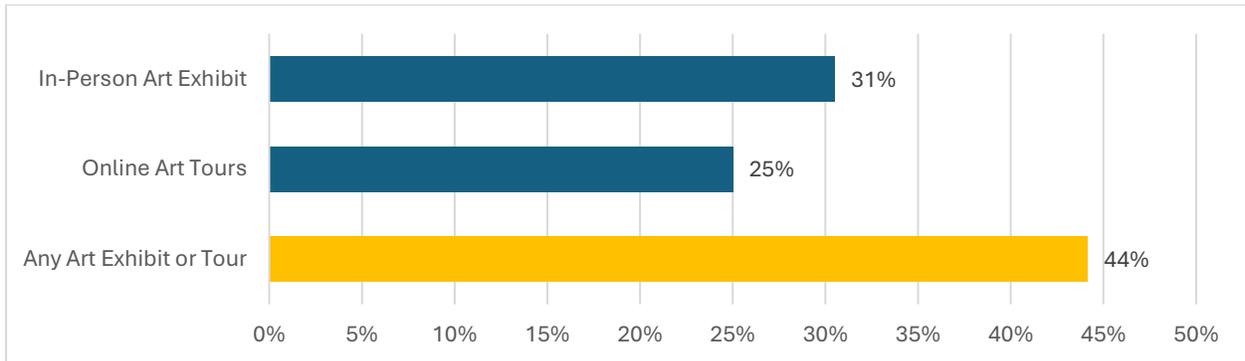
	<b>In-Person Performing Arts Event</b>	<b>Livestreamed Performing Arts Event</b>	<b>Web-Archived Performing Arts Event</b>	<b>Any Performing Arts Event</b>
Overall	50%	43%	70%	83%
Male	46%	40%	73%	82%
Female	53%	46%	68%	84%
Age 18-24	58%	48%	78%	93% <sup>†</sup>
Age 25-34	56%	44%	70%	84% <sup>†</sup>
Age 35-44	48%	53%	75%	91% <sup>†</sup>
Age 45-54	40%	44%	76%	84% <sup>†</sup>
Age 55-64	55%	39%	69%	82% <sup>†</sup>
Age 65+	43%	36%	57%	68% <sup>†</sup>
Hispanic	50%	44%	74% <sup>†</sup>	86%
Non-Hispanic Black	33%	64%	82% <sup>†</sup>	91%
Non-Hispanic Other	59%	40%	90% <sup>†</sup>	97%
Non-Hispanic White	52%	40%	65% <sup>†</sup>	80%
Less than high school	27% <sup>!†</sup>	43%	66%	77%
High school	44% <sup>†</sup>	44%	71%	82%
Associate/junior college	53% <sup>†</sup>	48%	65%	82%
Bachelor's	65% <sup>†</sup>	35%	68%	87%
Graduate	69% <sup>†</sup>	46%	74%	89%

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. <sup>!</sup> Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

## Art Exhibits and Online Art Tours

In contrast to the performing arts, virtual tours of art museums, galleries, and exhibits were less popular than in-person attendance at exhibits. Only 25 percent of respondents participated in an online art tour, versus 31 percent attending an art exhibit in person (see Figure 5). When considering both in-person and virtual attendance, however, the total proportion of adults engaging with an art exhibit in 2022 was 44 percent.

**Figure 5. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Art Exhibits or Online Art Tours: 2022**



Online art tours attracted different demographic groups than did art exhibits intended for in-person engagement (see Table 7). When considering either in-person art exhibit attendance or online art tours, differences by race/ethnic group are no longer significant. We still see a significant difference by education for any art exhibit or tour with more educated respondents attending the most, but the inclusion of online art tours particularly increases the share of those with less than high school education.

**Table 7. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended Art Exhibits or Online Art Tours, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

	In-Person Art Exhibit	Online Art Tour	Any Art Exhibit or Tour
Overall	31%	25%	44%
Male	28%	25%	41%
Female	33%	25%	48%
Age 18-24	41%	10% <sup>!</sup>	47%
Age 25-34	32%	24%	45%
Age 35-44	26%	28% <sup>!</sup>	43%
Age 45-54	26%	36%	45%
Age 55-64	31%	22%	45%
Age 65+	29%	28%	42%
Hispanic	19% <sup>†</sup>	20%	31%
Non-Hispanic Black	19% <sup>!†</sup>	44%	49%
Non-Hispanic Other	45% <sup>†</sup>	25% <sup>!</sup>	56%
Non-Hispanic White	34% <sup>†</sup>	23%	45%
Less than high school	14% <sup>!†</sup>	32% <sup>!</sup>	41% <sup>†</sup>
High school	26% <sup>†</sup>	22%	37% <sup>†</sup>
Associate/junior college	28% <sup>†</sup>	16%	37% <sup>†</sup>

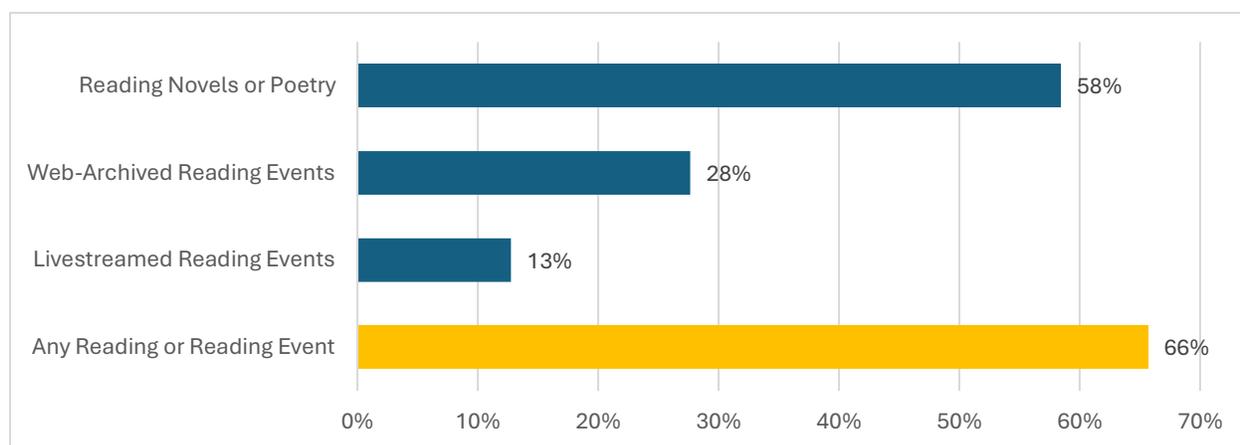
Bachelor's	47% <sup>†</sup>	22%	58% <sup>†</sup>
Graduate	42% <sup>†</sup>	44%	61% <sup>†</sup>

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. ! Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

## Reading Novels and Poetry

Reading novels or poetry was a relatively popular arts activity in 2022, according to the GSS Arts module results (58 percent; see Figure 6). While smaller portions of the population participated in web-archived (28 percent) or livestreamed (13 percent) reading events, nearly two-thirds of all adults (66 percent) reported either using those formats to access literature or reading novels or poetry directly.

**Figure 6. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Read Novels or Poetry, or Attended Reading Events: 2022**



Females reported reading more novels or poetry than males: 68 and 49 percent of each sex, respectively, read in these genres (see Table 8). Higher-educated respondents reported reading more novels or poetry than lower-educated respondents. These patterns differed somewhat among adults who engaged with livestreamed and archived reading events. Yet, when we look at adults who participated in any of these literary activities, we find that females and higher-educated respondents were more likely to do them.

**Table 8. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Read Novels or Poetry, or Attended Reading Events, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

	<b>Reading Novels or Poetry</b>	<b>Livestreamed Reading Events</b>	<b>Web-Archived Reading Events</b>	<b>Any Reading or Reading Event</b>
Overall	58%	13%	28%	66%
Male	49% <sup>†</sup>	10%	22% <sup>†</sup>	55% <sup>†</sup>
Female	68% <sup>†</sup>	16%	33% <sup>†</sup>	76% <sup>†</sup>
Age 18-24	56%	-	38%	73%
Age 25-34	69%	-	32%	76%
Age 35-44	51%	-	38%	61%
Age 45-54	53%	-	23%	56%
Age 55-64	57%	-	20%	62%
Age 65+	60%	-	20%	65%
Hispanic	48%	9% <sup>†</sup>	33% <sup>†</sup>	63%
Non-Hispanic Black	69%	31% <sup>†</sup>	60% <sup>†</sup>	79%
Non-Hispanic Other	66%	20% <sup>!†</sup>	44% <sup>†</sup>	74%
Non-Hispanic White	58%	10% <sup>†</sup>	19% <sup>†</sup>	63%
Less than high school	51% <sup>†</sup>	13%	48%	67% <sup>†</sup>
High school	49% <sup>†</sup>	12%	24%	58% <sup>†</sup>
Associate/junior college	63% <sup>†</sup>	13% <sup>!</sup>	27%	64% <sup>†</sup>
Bachelor's	70% <sup>†</sup>	11%	24%	74% <sup>†</sup>
Graduate	82% <sup>†</sup>	16%	26%	84% <sup>†</sup>

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. <sup>!</sup> Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent. Demographic categories which have at least one CV over 50 percent are suppressed.

## Arts Creation and Learning

Finally, we examine those who engaged in the creation of art. Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported creating or performing art themselves during the 12 months before the survey (see Table 9). These activities included music, theater, dance, creative writing, crafts, visual or digital art, film, or photography. Females (37 percent) were more likely than males (18 percent) to create or perform art. Respondents under the age of 35 were more likely than older respondents to do so.

**Table 9. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Created Art, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

	<b>Create Art</b>
Overall	28%
Male	18% <sup>†</sup>
Female	37% <sup>†</sup>
Age 18-24	44% <sup>†</sup>
Age 25-34	40% <sup>†</sup>
Age 35-44	22% <sup>†</sup>
Age 45-54	16% <sup>†</sup>
Age 55-64	26% <sup>†</sup>
Age 65+	23% <sup>†</sup>
Hispanic	22%
Non-Hispanic Black	33%
Non-Hispanic Other	18% <sup>!</sup>
Non-Hispanic White	29%
Less than high school	23% <sup>!</sup>
High school	25%
Associate/junior college	36%
Bachelor's	30%
Graduate	35%

Note. <sup>†</sup> The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. <sup>!</sup> Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

Twenty-seven percent of respondents during this time took an online class or watched an instructional video on creating or performing art (see Table 10). Female respondents (32 percent) were more likely to take an online art class than male respondents (22 percent). Black respondents were far more likely to take an online arts class than were adults from other racial/ethnic groups.

**Table 10. Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Attended an Online Art Class, by Demographic Characteristics: 2022**

	Online Art Class
Overall	27%
Male	22% <sup>†</sup>
Female	32% <sup>†</sup>
Age 18-24	36%
Age 25-34	30%
Age 35-44	32% <sup>!</sup>
Age 45-54	24%
Age 55-64	17%
Age 65+	25%
Hispanic	25% <sup>†</sup>
Non-Hispanic Black	49% <sup>†</sup>
Non-Hispanic Other	23% <sup>!†</sup>
Non-Hispanic White	21% <sup>†</sup>
Less than high school	27% <sup>!</sup>
High school	22%
Associate/junior college	46%
Bachelor's	23%
Graduate	36%

Note. † The reported difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. ! Interpret data with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

## Conclusions

The 2022 GSS Arts module provided a unique look into how the COVID-19 pandemic changed the arts participation landscape across a variety of activities. The new survey questions exploring virtual art and culture offerings helped shed light on how virtual options serve to complement in-person options.

Considering the 12 months before the survey, we saw that respondents were attending in-person performing arts events (50 percent) and art exhibits (31 percent) at rates comparable to those observed in previous waves of the GSS Arts module (2012 and 2016). In 2022, attendance at in-person performing events was similar to the rate of movie-going (54 percent).

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated performing arts venues to alter how they engaged with a quarantining population while the box offices were closed. However, this opened new avenues for venues to engage people in arts and culture that extended beyond the pandemic. The 2022 survey results show that 83 percent of respondents participated in some form of performing

arts event: in person, archived, or livestreamed. Livestreaming performances and making archived performances available removed barriers and extended access to different subgroups of the population. While less educated respondents have always been less likely to report attending an in-person performing arts event, the 2022 survey results show that group of adults to have experienced access to livestreamed and archived performance events at rates similar to those of their more educated peers.

While not all virtual options were as impactful for all demographic groups measured in the GSS Arts module, we do see a reasonably consistent pattern insofar as virtual options are helping to close gaps in performing arts and art exhibit attendance between populations, allowing more people to engage in arts and culture than ever before.

# Appendix: Methodology

## Data Collection

Each instance of the GSS Arts module was conducted through a different data collection approach utilized by the GSS. Below we describe the data collection methodology used to conduct the GSS Arts module for 2012, 2016, and 2022. A summary is included in Figure A1.

The 2012 GSS Arts module was conducted as part of the 2012 wave of the 2006-2014 GSS Panel. The 2006-2014 GSS Panel is made up of re-interviewed respondents from the 2006, 2008, and 2010 GSS cross-sectional surveys. Respondents from the 2008 GSS cross-section were asked to be re-interviewed in both 2010 (wave 2) and 2012 (wave 3); respondents from the 2010 cross-section were asked to be re-interviewed in 2012 (wave 2) and 2014 (wave 3). The 2012 GSS Arts module was asked of 2008 panelists (wave 3) and 2010 panelists (wave 2) totaling 2,846 panelist respondents. The 2008 GSS had a 70.4 percent response rate (AAPOR RR5<sup>6</sup>) with a 78.2 percent retention rate for wave 2 and 81.9 percent retention rate for wave 3 resulting in a final response rate of 45.1 percent<sup>7</sup> and final sample of 1,295 panelists. The 2010 GSS had a 70.3 percent response rate (AAPOR RR5) with a 75.9 percent retention rate for wave 2 resulting in a final response rate of 53.4 percent and final sample of 1,551. The 2012 survey was fielded between March 20 and September 5, 2012.

The 2016 GSS Arts module was conducted as a part of the main 2016 GSS survey which was fielded between April 5 and November 19, 2016. The 2016 GSS had a response rate of 61.3 percent (AAPOR RR5). The GSS Arts module was presented to a half sample of 2016 respondents, consistent with other topical modules in the main survey.

The 2022 GSS Arts module was conducted as an independent, follow-on study from the main 2022 GSS survey (specified in the GSS documentation as the NEA Arts Participation follow-on study). Respondents who completed the baseline GSS survey before September 21, 2022<sup>8</sup> were invited to complete the follow-on survey totaling 2,269 potential participants. The GSS Arts follow-on was fielded between July 11 and September 21, 2022. The follow-on study was a web questionnaire. The final study included 843 completes reporting an unweighted retention rate of 37.2 percent resulting in a final response rate of 18.8 percent.<sup>9</sup>

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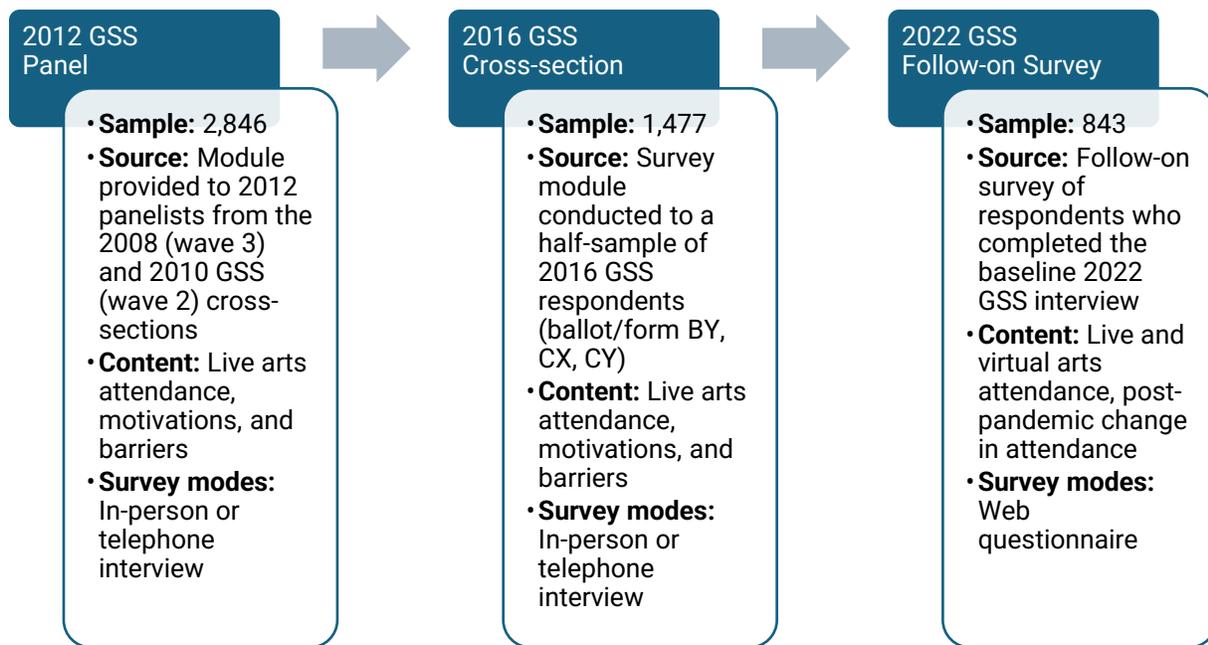
<sup>6</sup> The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) has established standardized definitions for reporting survey response rates. For the most current version of these definitions, see <https://aapor.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Standards-Definitions-10th-edition.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Panel (and follow-on) response rates are a simple multiplication of the original response rate with the corresponding retention rate(s). For example, the wave 3 response rate for the 2008 panelists is 70.4 percent x 78.2 percent x 81.9 percent = 45.1 percent.

<sup>8</sup> The 2022 GSS was conducted between May 4 and December 20, 2022. Approximately 64 percent of the final 2022 baseline respondents (3,544) had completed the baseline GSS survey by the time the GSS Arts follow-on was conducted.

<sup>9</sup> The response rate for the 2022 baseline sample was 50.5 percent (AAPOR RR3).

**Figure A1. GSS Arts Module Historical Design**



## Questionnaire and Question Wording

The 2012 and 2016 GSS Arts module question sets<sup>10</sup> are identical. With the need to pivot due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 GSS Arts module included a different set of questions.<sup>11</sup> However, two questions were mostly retained from the 2012/2016 questions.

Analyses in this report combined PRFMNCE (2012, 2016) and YRLVMUS (2022). PRFMNCE wording: “*With the exception of elementary or high school performances, **did you go to a live music, theater, or dance performance, during the last 12 months?***”<sup>12</sup> YRLVMUS wording: “During the last 12 months, **did you go in person to a live music, theater, or dance performance?**” The new wording specifies “in person” (something assumed in previous modules) but removes the exclusion of elementary or high school performances. This exclusion may serve to somewhat inflate 2022 estimates compared to 2012 and 2016 if respondents were also considering elementary and high school performances in their response.

<sup>10</sup> The 2012 GSS Arts questions can be found at [https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/Ballot3\\_2008\\_English.pdf#page=185](https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/Ballot3_2008_English.pdf#page=185) (2008 panelists wave 3 questionnaire) and [https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/Ballot2\\_2010\\_English.pdf#page=247](https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/Ballot2_2010_English.pdf#page=247) (2010 panelists wave 2 questionnaire). The 2016 GSS Arts questions can be found at <https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/quex2016/2016%20Quex%20Ballot%203%20For%20Public%20-%20English.pdf#page=188>.

<sup>11</sup> The 2022 GSS NEA Arts Participation follow-on questionnaire can be found at

[https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/GSS2022\\_NEA.pdf](https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/GSS2022_NEA.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> We note the differences in wording as follows: retained wording is **bolded**, rearranged wording is denoted with an underline, and differences are in *italics*.

Analyses in this report combined ARTEXBT (2012, 2016) and YRARTXBT (2022). ARTEXBT wording: **“During the last 12 months, did you go to an art exhibit, such as paintings, sculpture, textiles, graphic design, or photography?”** YRARTXBT wording: **“During the last 12 months, did you go *in person* to an art exhibit, such as paintings, sculpture, textiles, graphic design, or photography?”** The only difference in wording is the specification of “in person” (something assumed in previous modules) therefore construct comparability should be high for this item.

## Post-stratification Weighting

For all GSS Arts module years considered in this report, post-stratification population information came from ACS 1-year estimates. The eight post-stratification dimensions include:

- Census division (9 levels)
- Marital status (2 levels)
- Hispanic origin (2 levels)
- Education status (3 levels)
- U.S. born status (2 levels)
- Sex (2 levels)
- Race (3 levels)
- Age group (5 levels)

More information about the post-stratification weights, their creation, and impact relative to historical GSS weights can be found in GSS Methodological Report 137.<sup>13</sup>

Given the 2012 GSS Arts module came from the 2006-2014 GSS Panel and the 2022 module was a follow-on survey, post-stratification weights were calculated in both cases to ensure these respondents could analyzed and be representative of the U.S. population despite not being the original sample for those years. These weights account for nonresponse associated with losing respondents between the initial survey and the subsequent follow-up survey.

**Table A1. Data Sources and Post-Stratification Weights Used**

GSS Arts Module Year	Data Source	Analytic Weight
2012	GSS 2008 Panel Wave 3 (2012)	WTPANNRPS123
	GSS 2010 Panel Wave 2 (2012)	WTPANNRPS12
2016	GSS 2016	WTSSNRPS
2022	GSS 2022 NEA Arts Participation Follow-on	WTSSNRPS_NEA

## Analysis

Despite the complex sample design of the GSS, reported analyses do not specify stratification and clustering (variables VSTRAT and VPSU) as part of the complex survey estimation as this information is not available for all GSS Arts module samples.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://gss.norc.umd.edu/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/reports/methodological-reports/GSS%20MR137%20Poststratification%20Weights.pdf>

All statistical tests reported are design-adjusted Rao-Scott Pearson chi-square tests<sup>14</sup> using a 95 percent confidence level.

Subgroup variables were defined using the following GSS variables and changes:

- Sex: variable SEX, no changes.
- Age: variable AGE, categorized into 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+.
- Race/ethnicity: combination of the variables RACE and HISPANIC, where if HISPANIC > 1 (any Hispanic ethnicity) then respondent is categorized as Hispanic and if HISPANIC = 1 then RACE is reported.
- Education: variable DEGREE, no changes.

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<sup>14</sup> Heeringa, S. G., West, B. T., & Berglund, P. A. (2010). *Applied survey data analysis*. CRC Press LLC.