

Creating, Practicing, and Performing Art in the U.S.: Demographic and Rural/Urban Differences

A National Endowment for the Arts Research Brief Based on the 2018 Arts Basic Survey

Overview

In 2018, the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau surveyed adults (aged 18 and over) to understand whether they create and perform art of their own. According to results from this large, nationally-representative survey, 33.4 percent of adults, or 83 million Americans, did at least one of the following activities in a 12-month period:

- Performing arts (Played a musical instrument; acted; performed or practiced dance; performed or practiced singing): 16.2 percent, or 40.3 million adults
- Craft arts (Worked with pottery, ceramics, or jewelry; did leatherwork, woodwork, or metalwork; did weaving, crocheting, quilting, needlepoint, knitting, or sewing): 15.7 percent, or 39.1 million adults
- Film/photography (Produced films, videos, or photographs as an artistic activity): 11.7 percent, or 29.2 million adults
- Visual arts (Created visual art such as paintings, sculpture, or graphic designs): 7.5 percent, or 18.4 million adults
- Creative writing (Did any creative writing such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or plays): 4.7 percent, or 11.6 million adults

The remainder of this research brief will describe urban/rural and demographic characteristics of adults participating in these different types of personal arts creation and performance. Top-line findings are:

- Rural residents (living outside of metropolitan areas) are more likely to sing and do crafts than are adults in urban/metro settings. In 2018, nearly 12 percent of rural versus 9 percent of urban adults practiced or performed singing. Rural adults are also more likely than urban adults to do textile arts (11 percent rural versus 9 percent urban) and leatherwork/woodwork/metalwork (8 percent versus 6 percent urban). In total, 8.3 million rural residents sing or do crafts.
- Women sing, dance, and create visual art at higher rates than men, but men are more likely than women to play a musical instrument. For example, over 10 percent of women versus 8 percent of men performed or practiced singing in 2018, and 4 percent of women versus 2 percent of men practiced or performed dance. Meanwhile, over 10 percent of men versus 7 percent of women played an instrument. In total, 24.2 million women sing, dance, or create visual art.
- In general, young adults create or perform art at higher rates than older adults, with 11 percent of 18-to-34-year-olds playing a musical instrument versus 8 percent of adults 35 and older. Similarly, 14 percent of 18-to-34-year-olds took photographs as an artistic activity versus 9 percent of adults aged 35 and older. Adults aged 18-34 are also more likely to create paintings and other visual art, and to do creative writing. In total, 26.4 million young adults create or perform art.
- Older adults are more likely to do craft arts than are younger adults. Only 4 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds worked with leather, wood, or metal, compared with 7-8 percent of adults between 35 and 74 years old. Among adults 65 years of age and older, roughly 13 percent did textile arts versus 6 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds. In total, 9.4 million adults 65 and older do craft arts.
- Singing is equally as popular among non-Hispanic whites as among African Americans, Asian Americans, and adults from other non-Hispanic racial/ethnic backgrounds. Roughly 10-12 percent of adults in each of these groups performed or practiced this activity in 2018.
- Higher-educated adults are more likely to create and perform art than are lower-educated adults. Adults with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education are twice as likely as those with less education to play a musical instrument, create visual art such as paintings, take photographs, and do creative writing.

By tracking the relationships between these demographic and urban or rural subgroups and personal art-making activities, cultural policy decision-makers and arts professionals might serve the public more effectively with arts programming and learning opportunities tailored to these groups.

Personal Performance and Creation of Art in Rural Areas

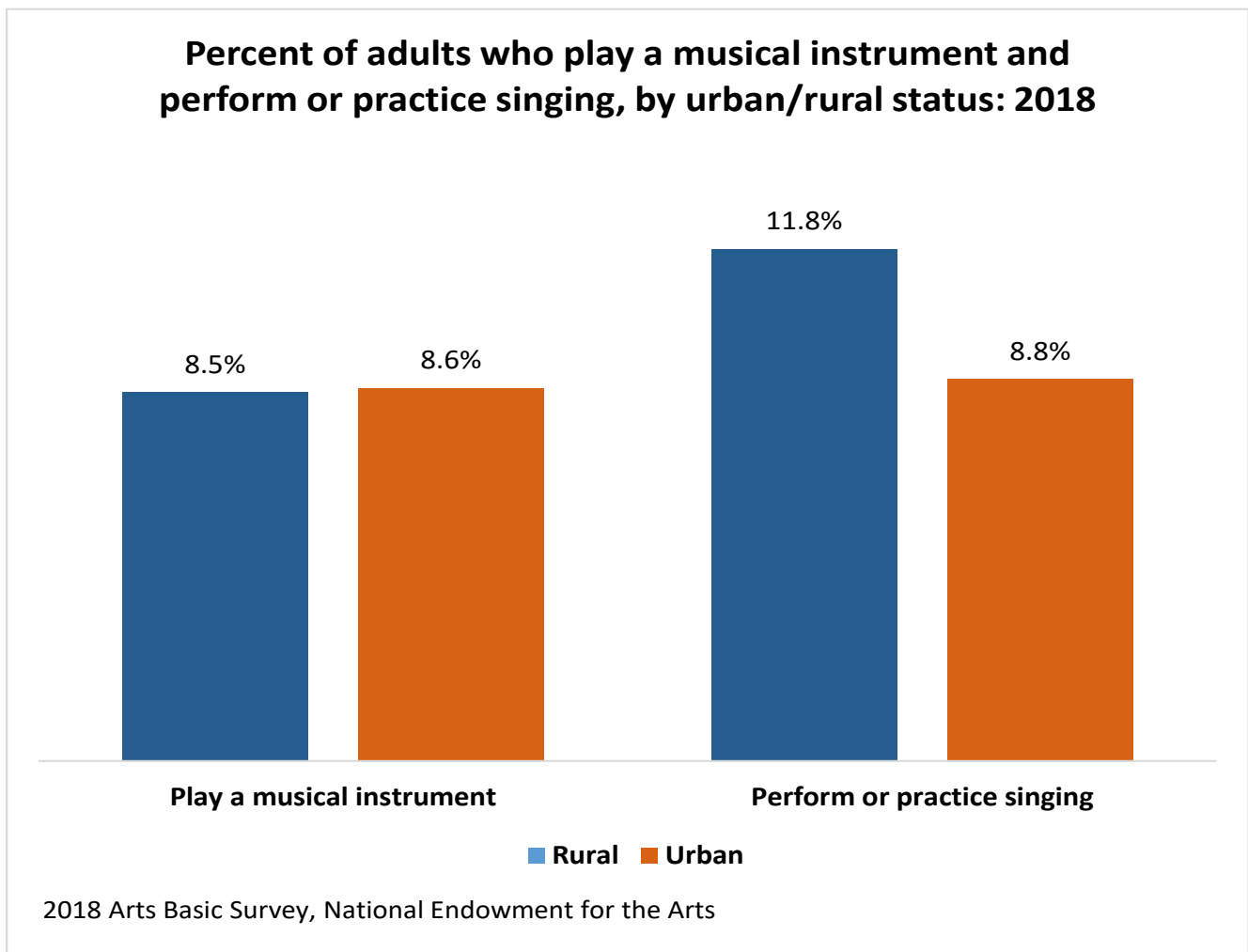
Performing Arts

In 2018, 8.5 percent of adults in rural areas reported playing a musical instrument; the same share was reported by urban dwellers.¹

Rural dwellers are more likely to perform or practice singing. In 2018, 11.8 percent of adults living in non-metro areas reported this activity. The share was almost 3 percentage points greater than for urban adults who performed or practiced singing.

Performing or practicing dance is less common among rural dwellers. In 2018, 1.9 percent did this activity—a share significantly lower than the 3.3 percent of urban dwellers who performed or practiced dance.

In 2018, approximately 1 percent of adults living in both rural and in urban areas said they did acting.



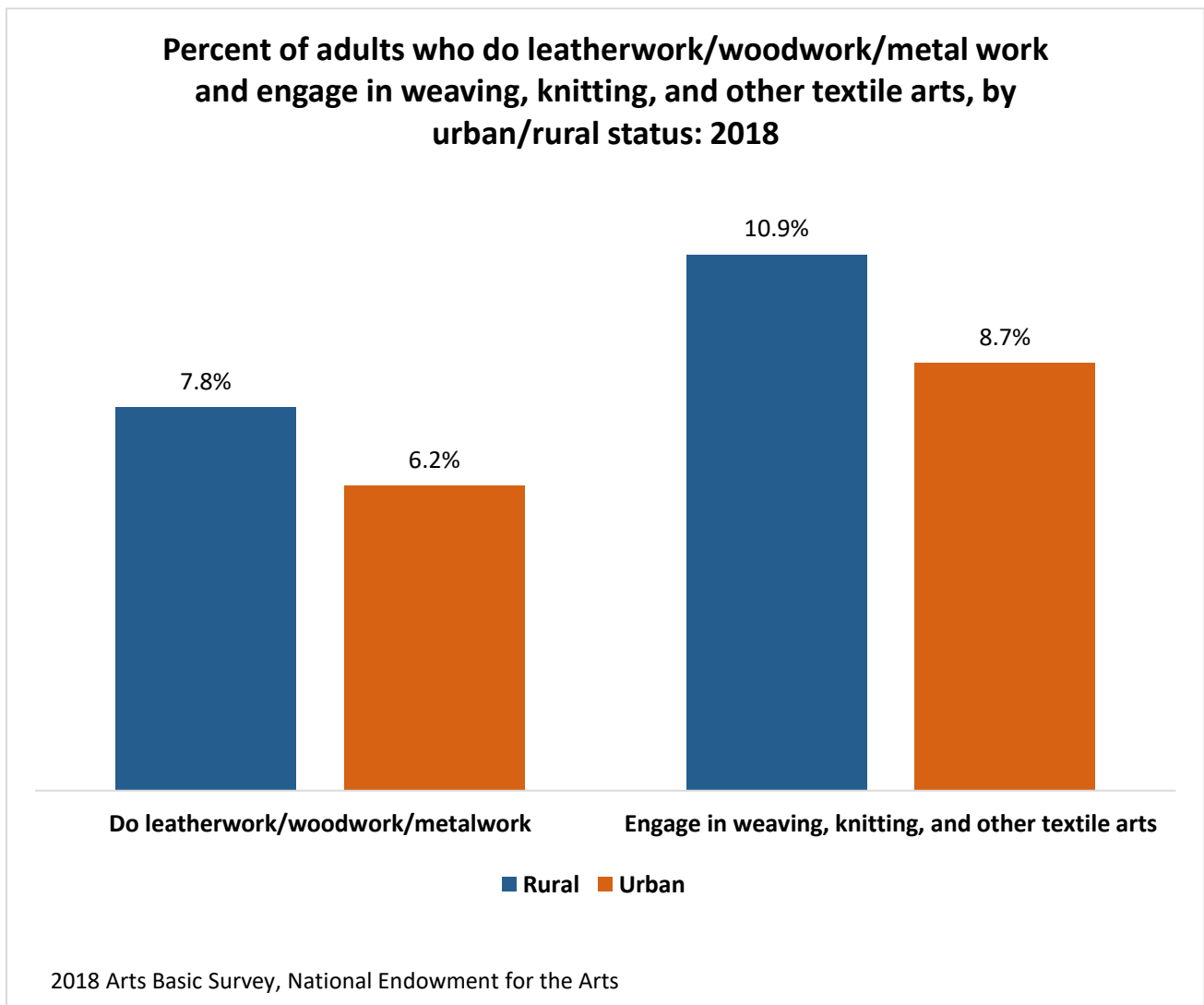
Craft Arts

Greater shares of rural than urban dwellers do leatherwork, woodwork, and metal work. Weaving, knitting, and engaging in other textile arts is also more popular in rural areas.

In 2018, 7.8 percent of adults in rural areas did leatherwork/woodwork/metalwork; 10.9 percent did weaving and other textile arts.

The respective shares of urban dwellers who engaged in those activities were a little lower—6.2 percent and 8.7 percent.²

Still, urban and rural dwellers report comparable rates of working with pottery, ceramics, or jewelry. Roughly 3 percent of all adults (rural and urban alike) engage in these crafts.

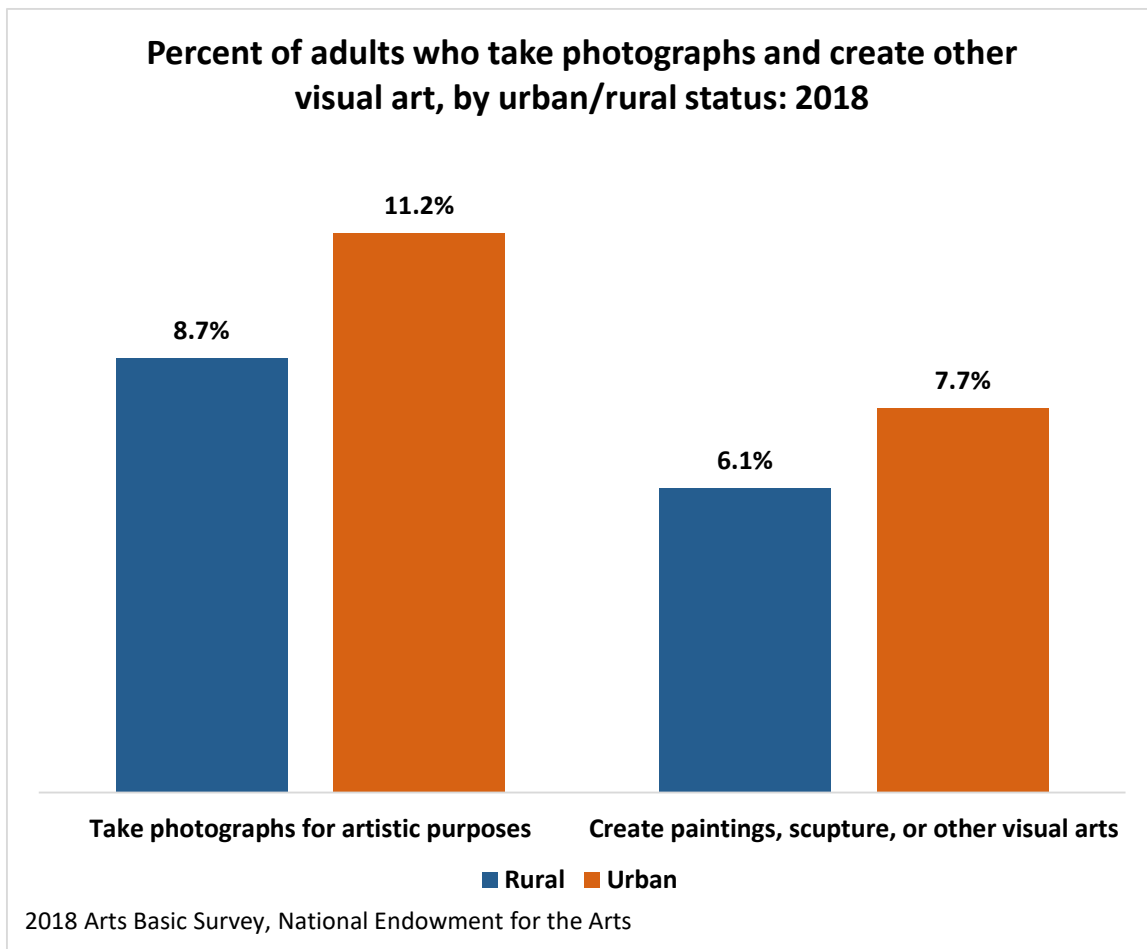


Other Art-Making

Roughly 4 percent of adults living in both rural and urban areas did creative writing (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or plays).

Compared with adults living in rural areas, however, urban dwellers are somewhat more likely to take photographs for artistic purposes or to create other visual art such as paintings or sculpture.

In 2018, 11.2 percent of urban dwellers took photographs and 7.7 percent created other visual art. In rural areas, 8.7 percent and 6.1 percent, respectively, engaged in those creative activities.



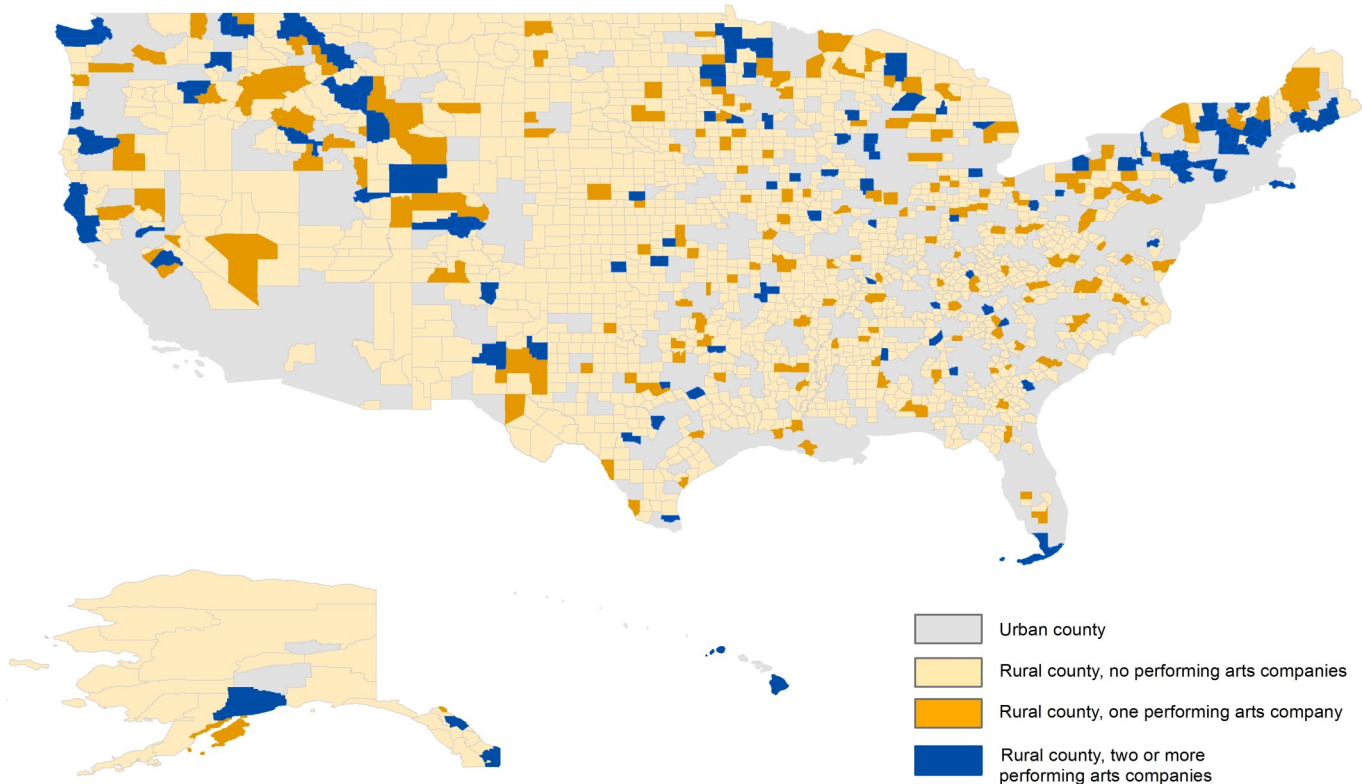
Access to Arts Venues in Rural Areas

Any analysis of urban and rural patterns of arts participation must account for sharp differences in their attendance at arts events. For example, the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) shows that 28 percent of adults living in rural areas attended at least one live music, theater, or dance performance in 2017. Among urban dwellers, the rate was 10 percentage points higher. Similarly, more urban than rural dwellers (25.3 percent versus 13.5 percent) reported visiting art museums or galleries over the same period.

The concentration of performing arts centers and art museums and galleries in urban areas is a factor in understanding the urban-rural gap in arts attendance. According to data from the 2017 SPPA, 69 percent of urban dwellers agreed there are many different kinds of arts and cultural activities in their neighborhoods or communities. By contrast, 45 percent of rural dwellers agreed with this statement.

When it comes to accessing arts venues, further evidence of the urban-rural divide is shown by data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). According to QCEW data for 2017, nearly 17 percent of rural counties housed performing arts companies. The share in urban counties, by contrast, was nearly 60 percent.³

Performing arts companies in rural U.S. counties: 2017



Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW),
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Personal Performance and Creation of Art: Demographics

Performing Arts

Although men are more likely to play a musical instrument, more women than men perform or practice singing.

In 2018, more than 10 percent of men reported playing a musical instrument at least once over a 12-month period. Just 7 percent of women did so.

Over the same period, 10 percent of women performed or practiced singing and 4 percent danced. Just 8 percent of men did singing, and only 2 percent performed or practiced dance.

The share of non-Hispanic whites playing a musical instrument was 10.2 percent, a rate significantly greater than that for adults of other races/ethnicities.

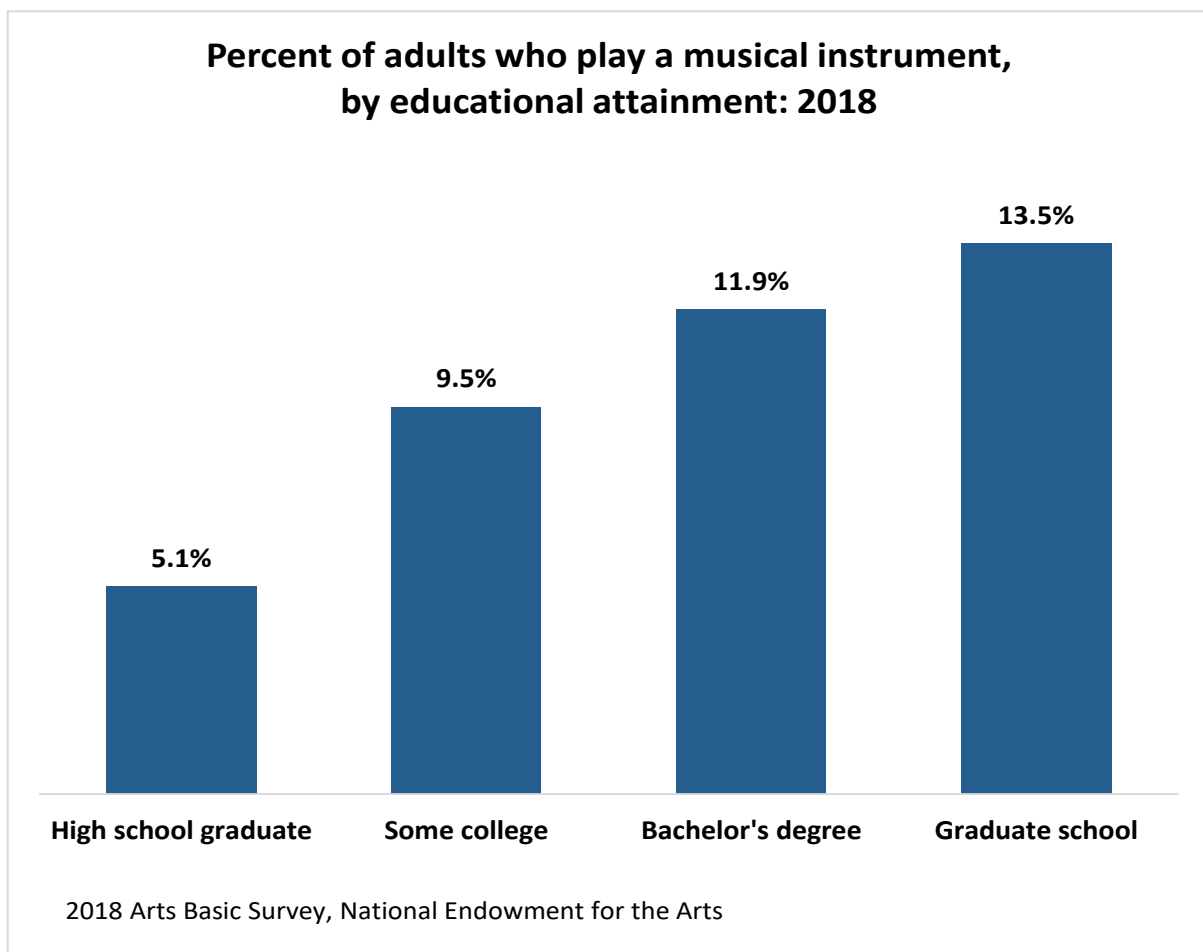
Non-Hispanic whites, African Americans, and Asians practice singing or dance at similar rates. In 2018, 10-11 percent of adults in each category performed or practiced singing, and 3-4 percent danced.

Hispanics performed or practiced singing and dance at lower rates—6 percent and 2 percent, respectively.⁴

The share of adults who participate in any of these activities—playing a musical instrument and performing or practicing singing or dance—generally declines with age.

In 2018, roughly 12 percent of young adults aged 18 to 24 performed or practiced singing. That share fell to 8 percent for adults 45 to 54.

Conversely, personal performance of art generally rises with educational attainment.



Craft Arts

While women are more likely to work with pottery, ceramics, and jewelry, or to weave, crochet, or create other textile arts, men are more likely to do leatherwork, woodwork, or metalwork.

During the 2018 period examined, nearly 5 percent of women created pottery/ceramics/jewelry; 16 percent did textile arts. Only 1.5 percent of men engaged in either activity.

The percentage of men who did leatherwork/woodwork/metalwork was 10 percent—a rate 7 percentage points greater than that for women.

Non-Hispanic whites engage in craft arts at higher rates than do adults of other races and ethnicities. For example, 11 percent of whites do weaving, crocheting, or other textile arts. For Hispanics and for African Americans and Asians, the share was 4-5 percent.

Nearly 4 percent of non-Hispanic whites work with pottery, ceramics, and jewelry; 2 percent of

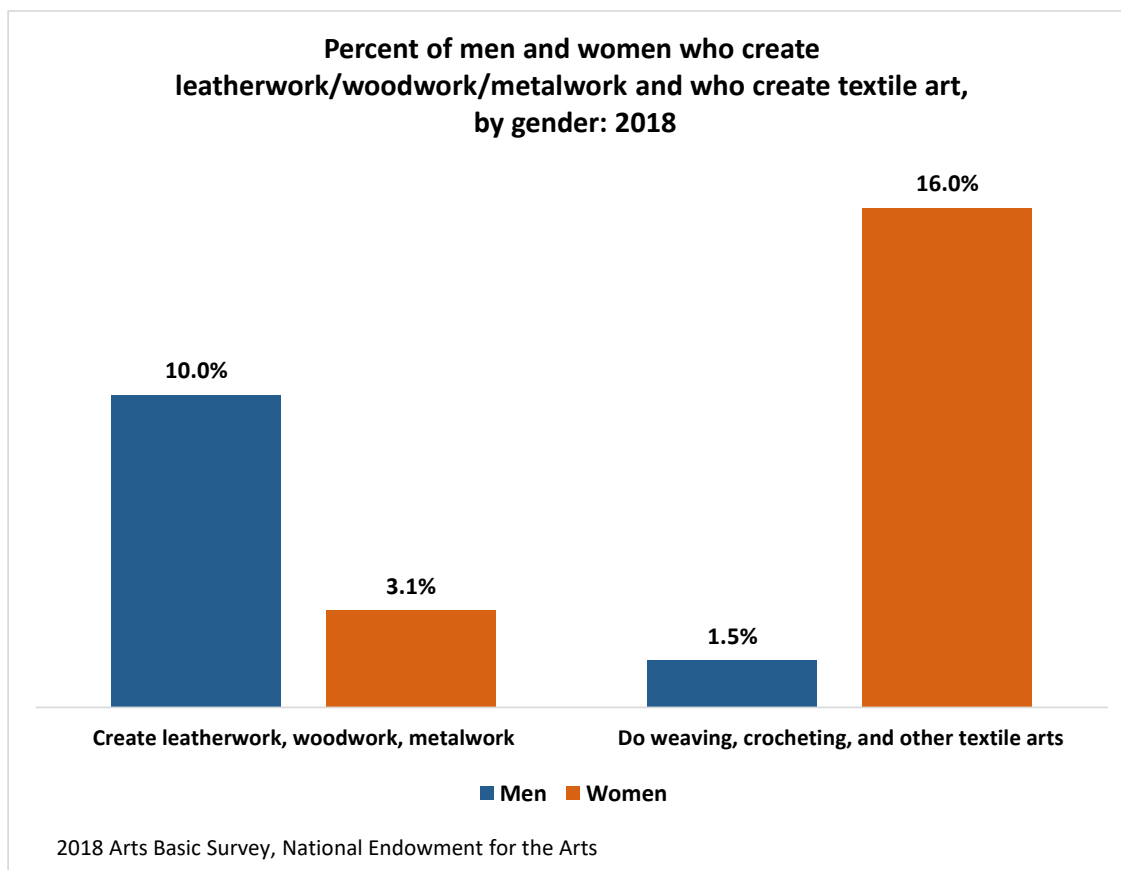
Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians engage in these crafts.

The share of Hispanic, African American, and Asian adults who do leatherwork, metalwork, or woodwork was 1-3 percent for each racial and ethnic group. For non-Hispanic whites, the share was more than 8 percent.

Unlike personal performance and visual art-making activities, which are more commonly practiced by young adults, engaging in craft arts is more consistent across age groups, and in some cases, is more popular among older adults.

Leatherwork/woodwork/metalwork is one such anomaly. In 2018, 4.4 percent of adults aged 18-24 did these activities. Among adults 55-64, the rate was 7.5 percent.

Similarly, the percent of adults aged 65-74 who did weaving or other textile arts was nearly twice that of the share of 18-24-year-olds who participated in this activity.



Other Art-Making

Compared with men, women are more likely to take photographs as an artistic activity or to create visual art. The 2018 Arts Basic Survey shows that the share of women who created paintings, sculpture, or other visual art was almost 4 percentage points greater than or men creating in those art forms—9.3 percent of women versus 5.5 percent of men.

When it comes to creative writing, men and women participate at similar rates. In 2018, the share of women who did creative writing was 5.2 percent—a rate not significantly different from the 4.2 percent of men who wrote.⁵

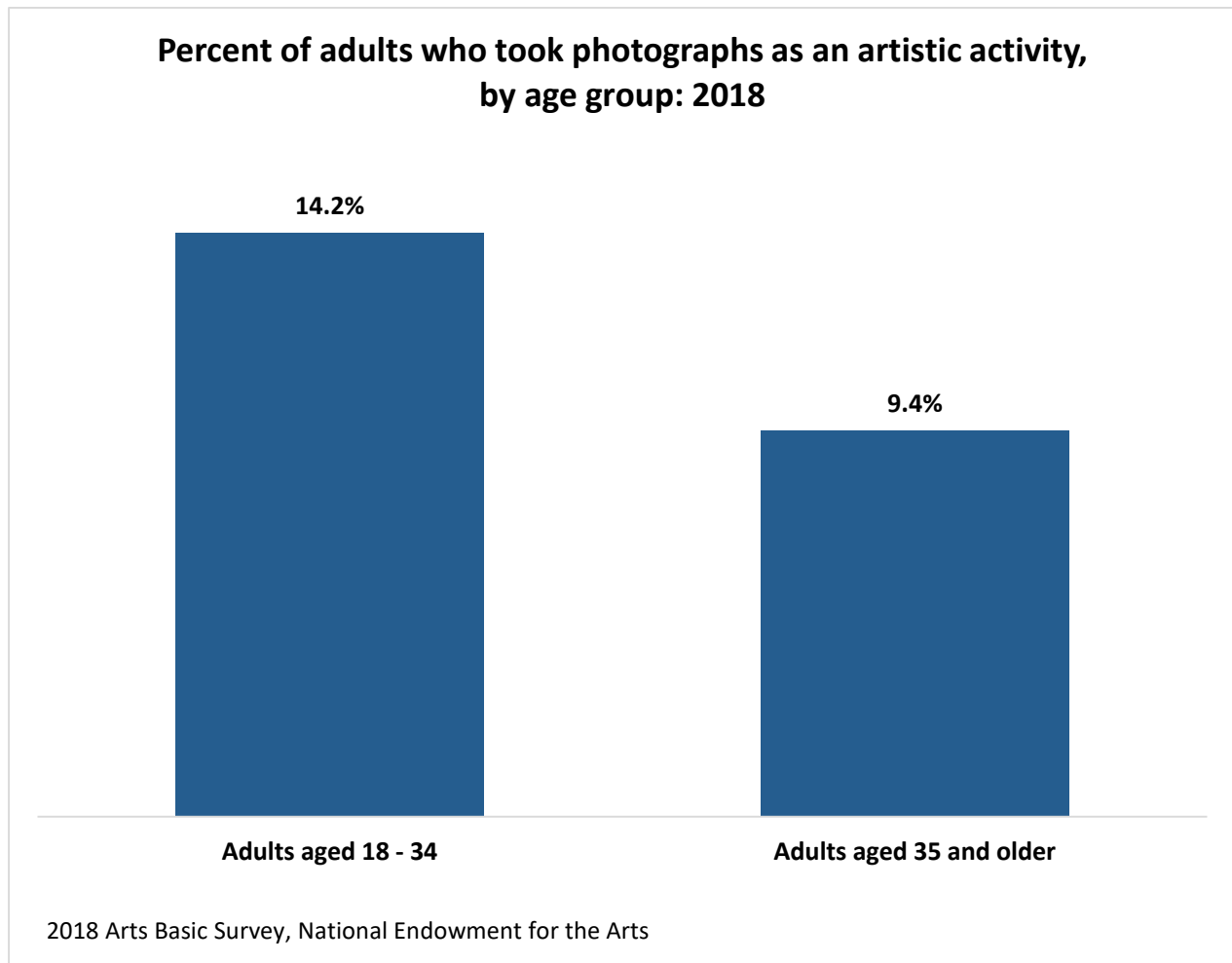
Non-Hispanic whites and Asians take photographs (as an artistic activity) at approximately the same

rate—11-13 percent. Approximately 6-7 percent of African Americans and Hispanics reported doing photography.

As with the personal performance of music, dance, and theater, the tendency to create in other art forms tends to fall with age and rise with education.

For example, approximately 14 percent of 18-34-year-olds took photographs as an artistic activity; little more than 9 percent of adults 35 and older engaged in photography.

Approximately 11 percent of adults with at least a bachelor's degree reported creating paintings, sculpture, and other visual artworks. By comparison, just 4 percent of those whose highest level of training was high school reported doing these visual art activities.



End Notes

¹ In this document, “urban” refers to metropolitan statistical areas and “rural” is non-metro.

² Percentage differences in engagement in leatherwork/woodwork/metalwork and in textile arts between rural and urban-dwelling adults are statistically significant at 90 percent confidence.

³ For more information, see *Rural Arts, Design, and Innovation in America* (2017).

⁴ In addition to asking about performing or practicing dance, the Arts Basic Survey also asked respondents if they had done any social dancing, including dancing at weddings, clubs, and other social settings. In 2018, roughly 22 percent of adults in most racial and ethnic groups, including Hispanics, did social dancing. The share doing social dancing was lower, however, for non-Hispanic Asians—15.6 percent.

⁵ Statistical significance was tested at 90 percent confidence.