



## Arts Data Profile #10: Results from the Annual Arts Basic Survey (2013-2015)

### Research Brief #3: Urban/Rural Patterns of Arts Participation

As a supplement to the Current Population Survey, the Annual Arts Basic Survey (AABS) can be used to investigate differences in urban and rural participation in the arts. This brief uses the 2014 and 2015 waves of the survey to report these patterns.

Approximately 85 percent of the U.S. adult population resides in urban, metropolitan areas. Consistent with prior NEA research results, the AABS indicates that this population generally attends arts events at greater rates than do adults living in nonmetropolitan, rural areas.<sup>1</sup> However, differences between urban and rural arts participation are small or nonexistent when the personal performance or creation of artwork, rather than attendance at arts activities, is measured.

Among urban, metropolitan residents, the AABS shows little difference in arts participation rates between a metro's city and suburban divisions. However, differences in arts participation by metropolitan population size are apparent—attendance at arts events tends to be more popular among residents of large metropolitan areas, while rates of personal performance and creation of artworks are generally greater in small metro areas.

## Summary

- Adults residing in urban, metropolitan areas attend arts events at greater rates than do adults living in rural areas.
  - \* In 2015, 33.4 percent of adults residing in urban areas attended a live music, theater, or dance performance. That same year, 21.4 percent of adults in rural areas attended.
  - \* Nearly 20 percent of adults living in urban areas reported visiting art exhibits, versus 12 percent of rural residents.
  
- Differences in the share of urban and rural-residing adults who perform or create artworks are small or nonexistent, depending on the art form considered.
  - \* In 2014, the proportion of adults who created pottery, ceramics, or jewelry was roughly 3 percent of both urban and rural dwellers.
  - \* Urban and rural participation rates were also similar for weaving, crocheting, or creating other textile arts (11 percent); performing or practicing dance (2-3 percent); and performing or practicing singing (8 percent).
  
- Among urban residents, there are differences in participation by size of metropolitan area.
  - \* More than 35 percent of adults residing in metro areas with populations of at least 1 million went to a live music, theater, or dance performance in 2015. Among residents of smaller metros (populations less than 1 million), the rate was 29.5 percent—six percentage points lower.
  - \* 11.4 percent of residents of metro areas with populations less than 1 million played a musical instrument. The rate among residents of large metros (populations of at least 5 million) was 7.6 percent—3.8 percentage points lower.
  
- In addition to reporting rates for broad metropolitan and non-metropolitan categories, the AABS gives arts participation rates for 11 large U.S. metro areas.
  - \* In the Denver-Aurora-Boulder area, 46.5 percent of adults attended a live music, theater, or dance performance in 2015. That rate was nearly 15 percentage points greater than the national performing-arts attendance rate of 31.6 percent.
  - \* Residents of Greater Detroit attended art exhibits at above-average rates. In 2015, the share going to an exhibit was 27 percent, a rate exceeding the national rate of just under 19 percent.
  - \* Chicago-area residents reported above-average movie-going rates (nearly 68 percent), as did residents of Greater Dallas (67 percent).
  - \* Across the U.S., 3 percent of adults performed or practiced dance. But in the San Francisco area, 6 percent danced; the share of New Yorkers who did this activity was somewhere in between (4.6 percent).

## Definitions of Urban and Rural

There are two main definitions of urban and rural areas. First, the U.S. Census Bureau's urban and rural classification refers to urban as an area of densely developed territory—an urbanized area of 50,000 or more people, or an urban cluster of at least 2,500 people but less than 50,000 people. Under this definition, rural encompasses all territory not included within an urban area.

The second definition draws on the concept of a metropolitan area, a county-based definition. The metropolitan statistical area comprises the central county (or county equivalent) containing the core (urban area of at least 50,000 population) plus adjacent outlying counties having a high degree of social or economic integration with the central county. Nonmetropolitan counties are outside the boundaries of metropolitan statistical areas.

In the first definition, population density is the guiding concern; in the second, it is geographic isolation. Because arts participation is a social and economic phenomenon, this Research Brief uses the metropolitan/nonmetropolitan delineations of urban and rural. Notably, the Economic Research Service (Department of Agriculture) and the Office of Management and Budget (White House) also use this definition of urban and rural.

### Urban/Rural Patterns in Arts Participation

#### *Attendance at Arts Events*

Considering the nonprofit arts sector alone, nearly 90 percent of such organizations are located in urban, metropolitan areas.<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps not surprising, then, that adults residing in urban areas attend arts events at greater rates than do adults living in rural areas.

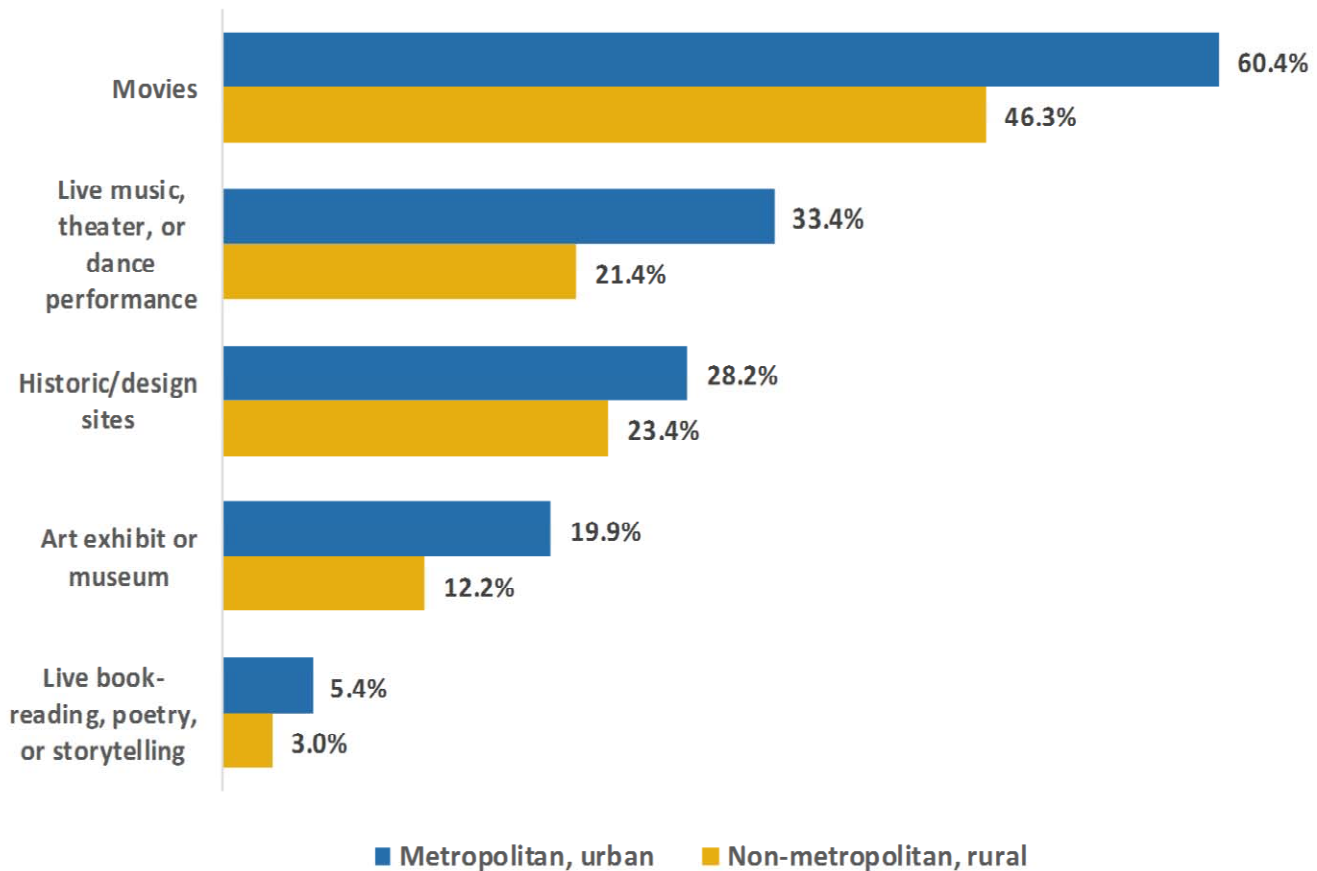
In 2015, for example, 33.4 percent of adults residing in urban areas attended a live music, theater, or dance performance. That same year, 21.4 percent of adults in rural areas attended.

Similar urban/rural differences in attendance are reported for movie-going and for attending art exhibits. For instance, nearly 20 percent of adults living in urban areas report visiting art exhibits, versus 12 percent of rural residents.

As for live book readings (including poetry readings and storytelling events), 5.4 percent of urban-dwelling adults attended in 2015. That rate was 2.4 percentage points greater than the share of rural residents attending spoken-word events.

In that same year, the percentage of urban adults visiting neighborhoods, buildings, or parks (for their historic or design value) was 28 percent, a rate roughly 5 percentage points greater than the share of rural adults visiting these places.

## Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attend or Visit Various Arts Events, by Urban/Rural Status: 2015



Data source: Annual Arts Basic Survey (AABS), National Endowment for the Arts

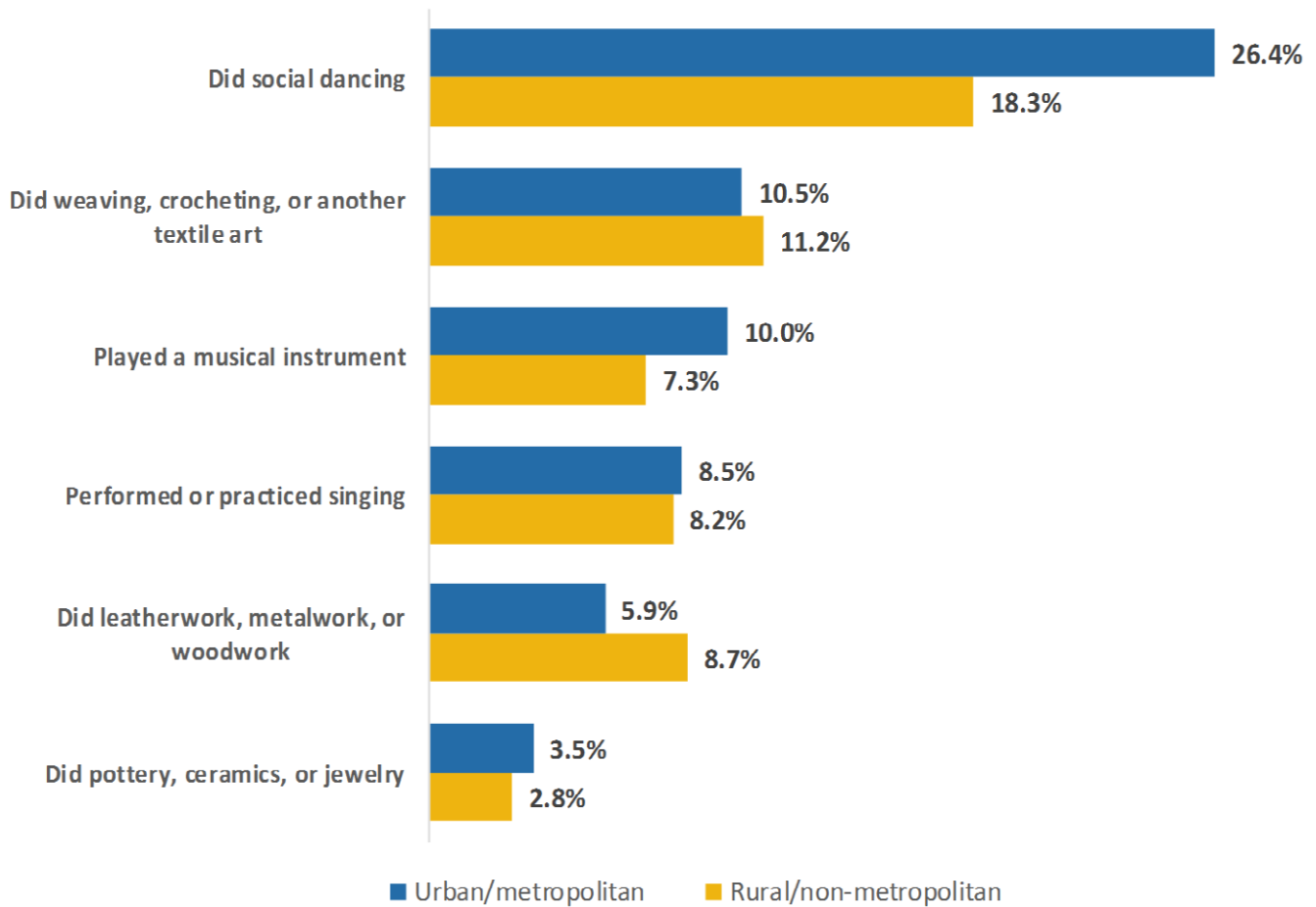
### *Personal Performance and Creation of Artworks*

Differences in the share of urban and rural-residing adults who perform or create artworks are small or nonexistent, depending on the art form considered. In 2014, for example, the proportion of adults who created pottery, ceramics, or jewelry was roughly 3 percent of both urban and rural-dwelling adults.

Urban and rural participation rates are also similar for weaving, crocheting, or creating other textile arts (11 percent); performing or practicing dance (2-3 percent); and performing or practicing singing (8 percent).

There are some notable differences, however. For example, social dancing (such as dancing at weddings or clubs) is significantly more popular among urban residents. In 2014, 26 percent of adults residing in urban areas did social dancing; among rural residents, that rate was 18 percent.

## Percent of U.S. Adults Who Personally Create or Perform Selected Types of Artworks: 2014



2014 Annual Arts Basic Survey (AABS), National Endowment for the Arts

Although the percentage-point difference between the two groups is much smaller, urban residents are somewhat more likely to play a musical instrument (10 percent urban versus 7 percent rural), while rural residents are a little more likely to create leatherwork, metalwork, or woodwork (6 percent urban versus 9 percent rural).

### *Reading Literature and Taking Art Classes*

Urban residents are somewhat more likely than their rural counterparts to read literature (plays, poetry, novels, or short stories) and to take arts classes in subjects such as photography, music or music appreciation, the performing arts such as dance and theater, creative writing, or art history.

In 2015, nearly 44 percent of adults residing in urban areas read literature. The literary-reading rate for rural residents was just under 40 percent. That same year, nearly 9 percent of urban residents in the study reported having taken arts classes in the previous 12 months. Among rural residents, that rate was a little lower—about 6 percent.

### Arts Participation by City and Suburban Divisions and by Size of Metro Area

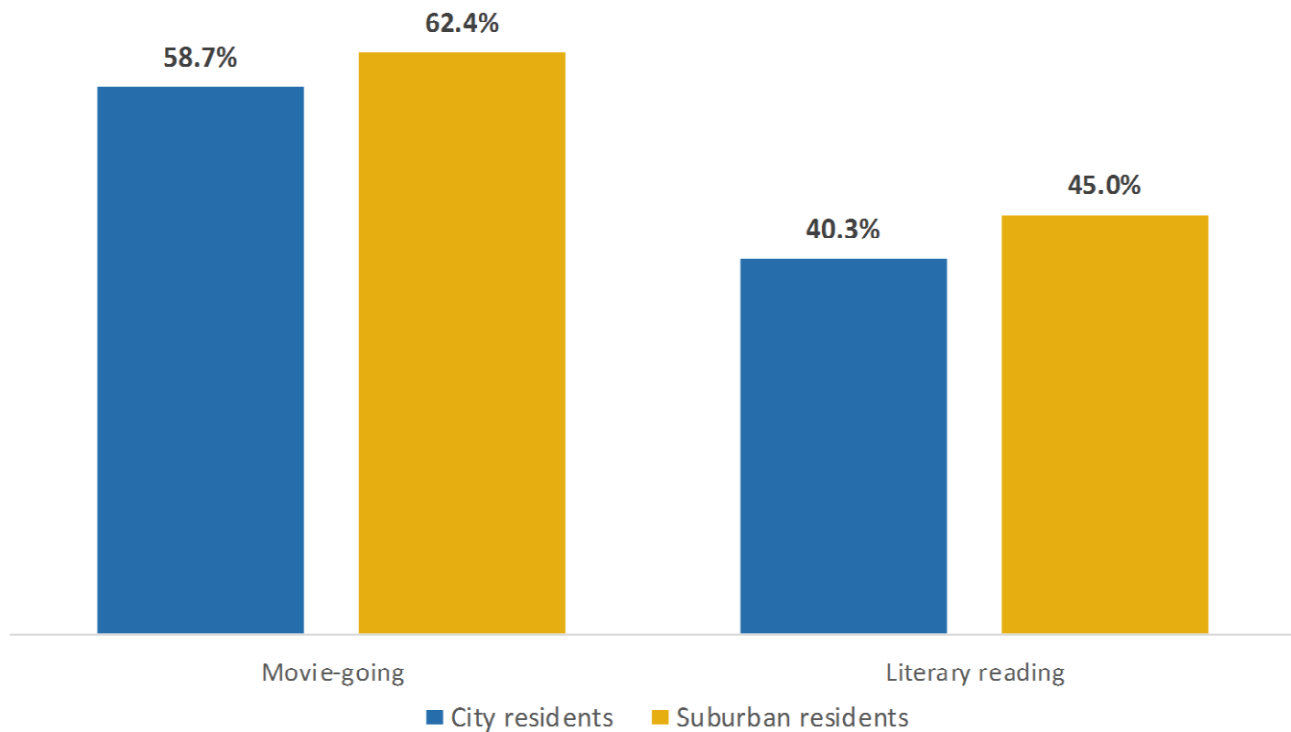
As a supplement to the Current Population Survey, the AABS captures “principal city/balance” status. In other words, the AABS can be used to distinguish arts participation between adults living in the city and suburb (i.e., “balance”) sections of a metropolitan area. (In the Greater Washington, D.C., area, for example, residents of the District of Columbia compose the principal city portion of the area, while residents of adjacent metro counties such as Fairfax County and Montgomery County make up the “balance,” or suburbs.<sup>3</sup>)

The AABS suggests that city dwellers and suburbanites tend to participate in the arts at similar rates. For example, 34 percent of both city and suburban residents attend performing arts events, and roughly 20 percent of both types of metro residents go to art exhibits.

Arts participation rates are also similar between city and suburban residents when it comes to creating and performing artworks. For example, both groups create pottery, do textile art, and practice or perform singing at virtually the same rates. And city and suburban dwellers are equally likely to have taken art classes in the past year.

Still, there are exceptions. Suburban dwellers are considerably more likely to read literature than are city residents, and suburban residents go to the movies at somewhat higher rates.

## Percent of U.S. Urban Adults Who Go to the Movies or Read Literature by City and Suburban Status: 2015



Source: Annual Arts Basic Survey (AABS), National Endowment for the Arts

While few differences between city and suburban arts participation are evident, there are demonstrable differences in participation by size of metropolitan area. For example, more than 35 percent of adults residing in metro areas with populations of at least 1 million went to a live music, theater, or dance performance in 2015. Among residents of smaller metros (populations less than 1 million), the rate was 29.5 percent—six percentage points lower.

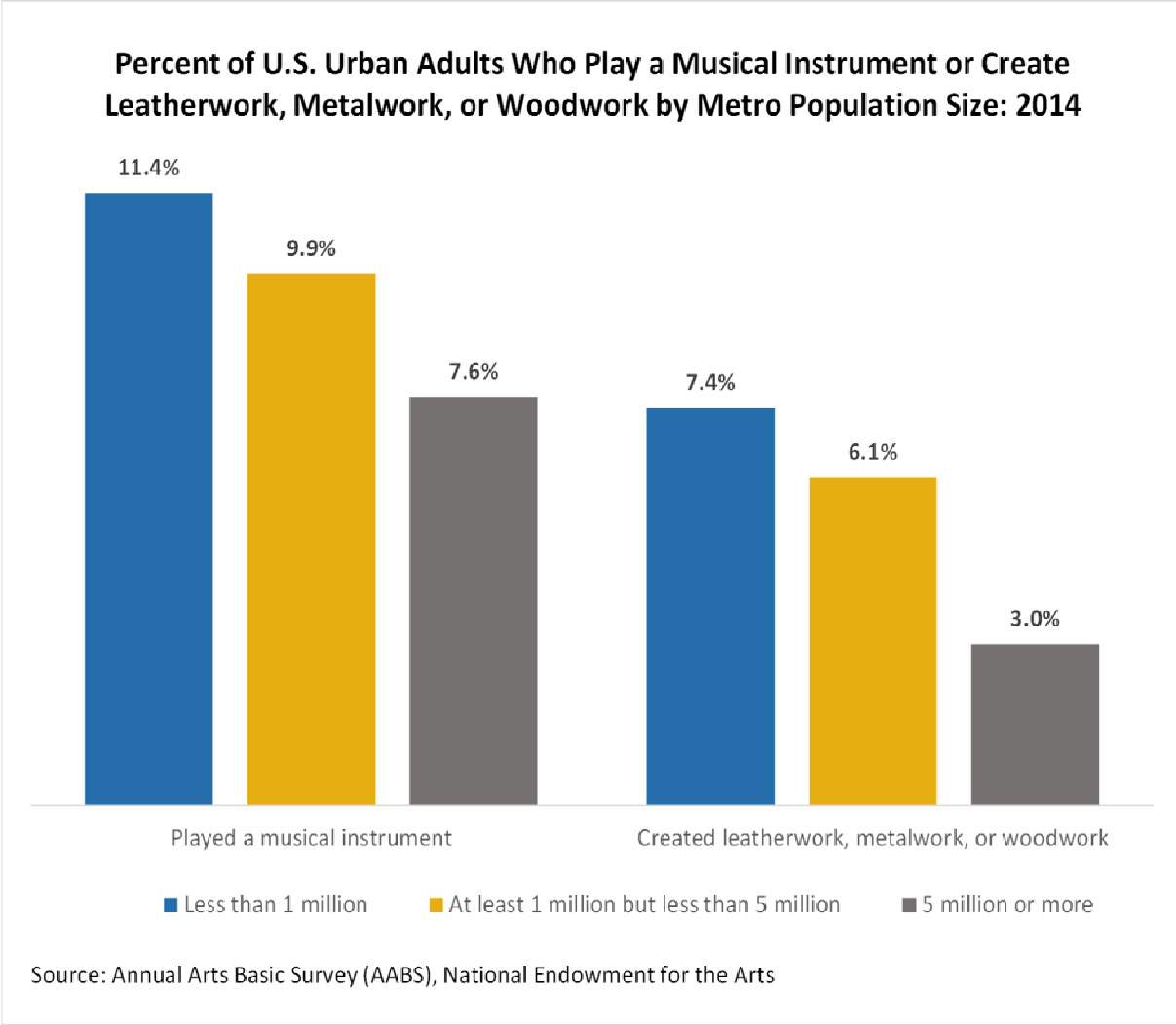
To some extent, adults residing in large metro areas are also more likely to tour a park, building, or other place for its historic or design value, or to have taken art classes in the past year. Roughly 29 percent of adults in metro areas of populations of

1 million or more toured such a site in 2015. Among residents of smaller metro areas, that share was less than 26 percent.

Moreover, nearly 10 percent of adults living in metro areas of at least 5 million took an art class in the previous 12 months. Among adults living in small metro areas, 8 percent took art classes.

When it comes to personal performance or creation of artworks, adults living in smaller metropolitan areas tend to participate at greater rates. For example, 11.4 percent of residents of metro areas with populations fewer than 1 million play a musical instrument. The rate among residents of large metros (populations of at least 5 million) is 7.6 percent—3.8 percentage points

lower. Adults living in small metro areas are also more likely to create leatherwork, metalwork, and woodwork (7.4 percent versus 3 percent of large-metro area dwellers) and to do weaving, crocheting, or other textile art (12.1 percent versus 8.2 percent).





### Arts Participation—11 Metropolitan Areas

In addition to broad metropolitan and non-metropolitan categories, the AABS reports arts participation rates for 11 specific U.S. metro areas.

They are:

Boston-Worcester-Manchester, MA-NH; Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City, IL-IN; Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX; Denver-Aurora-Boulder, CO; Detroit-Warren-Flint, MI; Los Angeles, Long Beach, Riverside, CA; Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL; New York-Newark-Bridgeport, NY, NJ, CT, PA; Philadelphia-Camden-Vineland, PA, NJ, DE, MD; San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, CA; and Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia, DC, MD, VA, WV.

AABS sample sizes are generally too small to rank arts participation rates among the 11 metro areas enumerated by the AABS. Nevertheless, some metro patterns emerge.

For example, in the Denver-Aurora-Boulder area, 46.5 percent of adults attended a live music, theater, or dance performance in 2015. That rate was nearly 15 percentage points greater than the national performing arts attendance rate of 31.6 percent.<sup>4</sup>

The share of adults attending performing arts events was also well above the national average in the New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco areas.

<b>Metro Areas with Above-Average Rates of Attendance at Live Music, Theater, or Dance Performances, 2015</b>		
	<b>Attendance rate</b>	
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>31.6%</b>	
<b>Denver-Aurora-Boulder, CO</b>	<b>46.5%</b>	
<b>Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia, DC, MD, VA, WV</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	
<b>San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, CA</b>	<b>40.6%</b>	
<b>New York-Newark-Bridgeport, NY, NJ, CT, PA</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	
<b>Data source: Annual Arts Basic Survey, National Endowment for the Arts</b>		

Denver and Washington, D.C. also surface as areas with above-average rates of reading literature and visiting sites for their historical or design value. In the Denver area, for example, nearly 66 percent of adults read literature (versus 43 percent of all U.S. adults), while in Washington, D.C., 46 percent visit buildings, neighborhoods, parks, or monuments for their historic or design value (versus a 27 percent national average).

The AABS reveals that residents of Greater Detroit attend art exhibits at above-average rates. In 2015, the share going to an exhibit was 27 percent, a rate exceeding the national rate of just under 19 percent.

Los Angeles may be the capital of movie production, but the movie-going rate in the L.A. area is only average (56 percent of adults go see movies or films). Chicago-area residents, on the other hand, report above-average movie-going rates (nearly 68 percent), as do residents of Greater Dallas (67 percent).<sup>5</sup>

Across the U.S., 3 percent of adults perform or practice dance. But in Greater San Francisco, 6 percent perform or practice dance; the share is also high in New York (4.6 percent).

Alternatively, social dancing (dancing at social settings), is popular in Detroit and Philadelphia. In both areas, the share of adults doing social dance—41 percent and 36 percent, respectively—exceeded the national average of 25 percent.

Meanwhile, creative writing is a favorite pastime in San Francisco and Boston. In both areas, the share of adults writing is roughly 10 percent. At the U.S. level, less than 6 percent of adults do creative writing.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See *Come as You Art: Informal Arts Participation in Urban and Rural Communities*, NEA Research Note #100. March 2010.

<sup>2</sup>An NEA analysis of filings of IRS Form 990, which is required of most tax-exempt organizations with gross receipts of at least \$50,000, shows that nearly 90 percent of tax-exempt performing arts organizations and art museums were located in urban, metropolitan areas in 2013, the most recent year of data available from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), Urban Institute.

<sup>3</sup>Cities such as Alexandria, Manassas, and Falls Church are treated, for statistical purposes, as counties within the D.C. metropolitan area.

<sup>4</sup>Residents of Greater Denver also reported above-average attendance at performing arts events captured by the 2012 SPPA. That year, the Denver-area performing arts attendance rate was more than 21 percentage points greater than the national average.

<sup>5</sup>Regarding the AABS sample design, the Dallas movie-going rate ranges from 55.5 percent to 77.2 percent, an interval that overlaps with the U.S. moving-going rate spanning 57.4 percent to 59.3 percent. These 90 percent confidence intervals suggest that the difference between the moving-going rates in Dallas and the U.S. are not “statistically significant.” However, the wide confidence intervals evident in Dallas likely reflect smaller sample sizes in that metro area; thus, the intervals do not necessarily demonstrate a Dallas movie-going rate that is average, or similar to the U.S. rate.