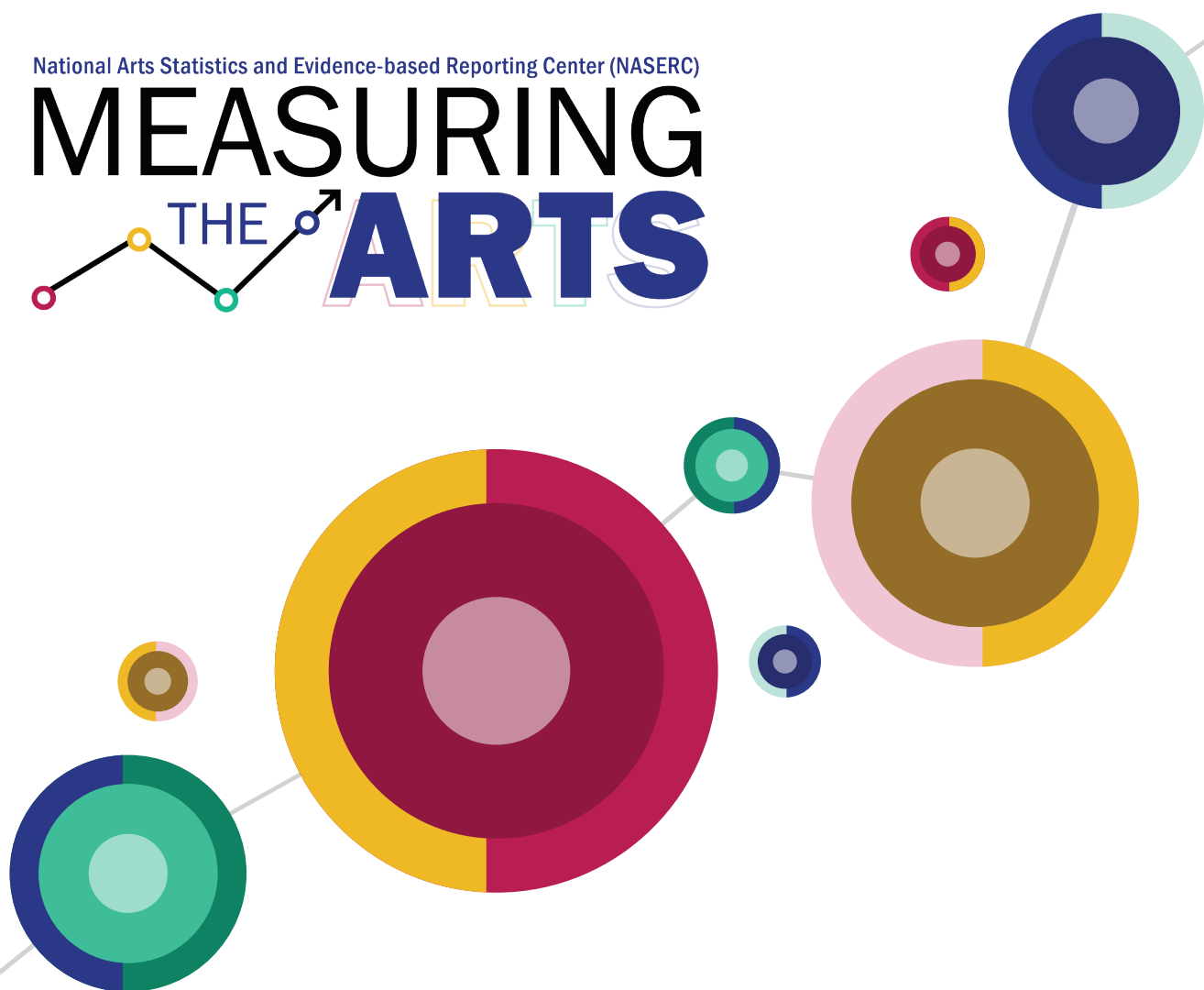


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

# MEASURING THE ARTS



Domain B

**Arts Participation**



Indicator B.4: **How Much Time Do  
Americans Spend on Arts Activities?**

## Introduction

Indicator B.4 explores the percentage of Americans, aged 15 and over, who are involved in arts activities outside of their employment and the amount of time they spend on these activities. Data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) were used to develop estimates of participation rates for, and time spent on, the following selected non-work-related arts activities: arts and crafts with children; listening to or playing music; arts and crafts as a hobby; reading or writing for personal interest; dancing; being an arts volunteer; and attending performing arts, museums, or movies or films. The ATUS provides a unique perspective on time use because respondents provide minute-level information on activities performed on the designated survey day.

For more information on how time use is measured in the ATUS, see Measuring time use. In contrast, other surveys, such as the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (see **Indicator B.1: Who Attends Arts Events in Person?** and **Indicator B.3: Who is Personally Creating or Performing Art?**) ask respondents to reflect on participation in activities over the past year.

## Individual's participation in arts activities

The most recent ATUS findings for the 2022–23<sup>1</sup> period indicated that the favorite arts activity among Americans was reading for personal interest (enjoyed by 16.5 percent of Americans on a typical day).<sup>2</sup> In addition, about 2.0 percent of individuals reported listening to or playing music, and 1.7 percent reported doing arts and crafts as a hobby (**Figure B4-1**). Activities in this latter category ranged from scrapbooking to making pottery or sculpting to artistic painting.

<sup>1</sup> This indicator uses three-year averages for estimates of time engaging in the selected arts-related activities. The three-year averages produce more stable estimates than annual estimates because they rely on the combined samples from three different years. For the most recent year, a two-year average is used. ATUS data collection was suspended from March 19, 2020, to May 11, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, ATUS 2020 data are not representative of the full year because they were collected for only ten months and do not contain information on how people spent their time during the period in which data were not collected. For more information, see <https://www.bls.gov/tus/atususersguide.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Differences between estimates (including trends over time) are stated only when they are statistically significant, based on a 95 percent level of confidence. For more information see *The Arts in the United States: Developing Key National Indicators of Arts Activity* report.

### Measuring time use

The [American Time Use Survey](#) (ATUS), conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, offers a unique perspective on the daily lives of Americans aged 15 and over. Each respondent reports activity information about a designated survey day on the following day. The ATUS Activity Coding Lexicon is a three-tiered classification system with 17 first-tier categories, each with two additional levels of detail. For example, category 12 is “socializing, relaxing, and leisure.” That first-tier category includes second-tier categories of “socializing and communicating,” “attending or hosting social events,” and “relaxing and leisure.” The latter second-tier category includes “arts and crafts as a hobby” and “reading for personal interest” as third-tier activities. The survey provides numerous examples of each third-tier activity.

One limitation of the ATUS is that survey respondents can choose only one activity during a given period (except when caring for others). Thus, if a respondent was listening to music while working, they would most likely mark “working” as the activity performed at that time. Similarly, if a person was listening to music while driving to work, the time would be classified as “travel to work” rather than “listening to music” or “working.” The survey includes information on travel times to activity locations, locations of activities (such as at home, at someone else’s home, or at a library) and types of people associated with the activity. Travel time to artistic events is not included in this indicator.

NEA previously analyzed ATUS data in: [An Average Day in the Arts: State Participation Patterns from the American Time Use Survey for 2006–2010](#).

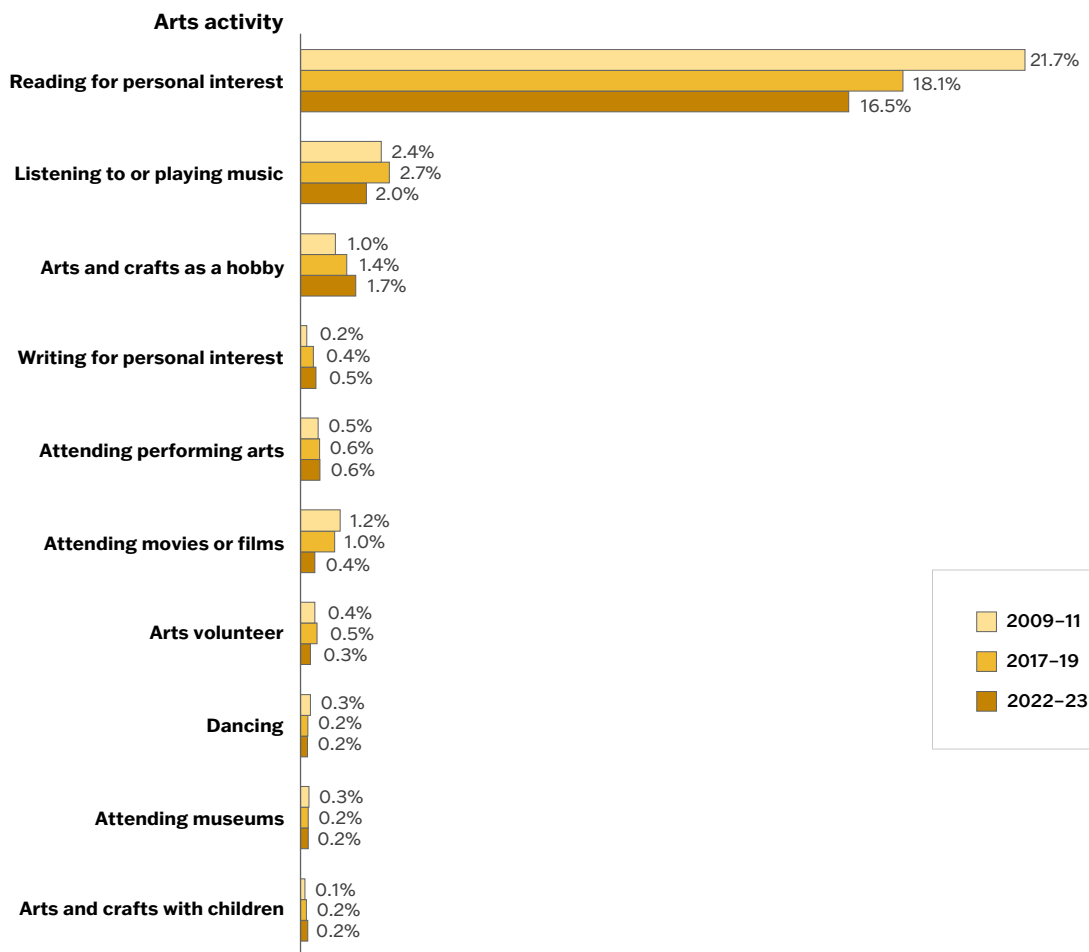
## Changes in individual's participation in arts activities over time

There were shifts in participation in some types of arts activities between 2009–11, 2017–19, and 2022–23. For example, more individuals reported writing for personal interest on a typical day in 2022–23 (0.5 percent) than in 2009–11 (0.2 percent). A higher share of individuals also reported doing arts and crafts as a hobby in 2022–23 (1.7 percent) than in 2009–11 (1.0 percent). In contrast, fewer individuals

reported reading for personal interest in 2022–23 (16.5 percent) than in 2009–11 (21.7 percent) or 2017–19 (18.1 percent). Fewer individuals also reported listening to or playing music in 2022–23 (2.0 percent) than in 2009–2011 (2.4 percent) or 2017–19 (2.7 percent). Changes in participation between 2017–19 and 2022–23 for some activities can likely be traced to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, fewer individuals reported attending movies or films in 2022–23 (0.4 percent) than in 2017–19 (1.0 percent) or 2009–11 (1.2 percent). The percentage of individuals who reported serving as arts volunteers in 2022–23 (0.3 percent) was also lower than the percentage in 2017–19 (0.5 percent).

The percentages of individuals who reported attending performing arts (0.6 percent), serving as an arts volunteer (0.3 percent), dancing (0.2 percent), attending museums (0.2 percent), or doing arts and crafts with children (0.2 percent) in 2022–23 were not measurably different from the 2009–11 percentages. Similarly, there were no measurable differences in individuals who reported doing arts and crafts as a hobby (1.7 percent), attending performing arts (0.6 percent), writing for personal interest (0.5 percent), attending museums (0.2 percent), doing arts and crafts with children (0.2 percent), or dancing (0.2 percent) in 2022–23 than from 2017–19 percentages. There were no activities more individuals reported doing in 2022–23 than in 2017–19.

**Figure B4-1. Percentage of individuals, aged 15 and over, engaging in selected arts activities on a typical day: 2009–11, 2017–19, and 2022–23**



NOTE: Excludes travel time to reach activity location. This figure uses three-year averages for estimates of time engaging in the selected arts-related activities. The three-year averages produce more stable estimates than annual estimates because they rely on the combined samples from three different years. For the final years of available data, a two-year average is used.

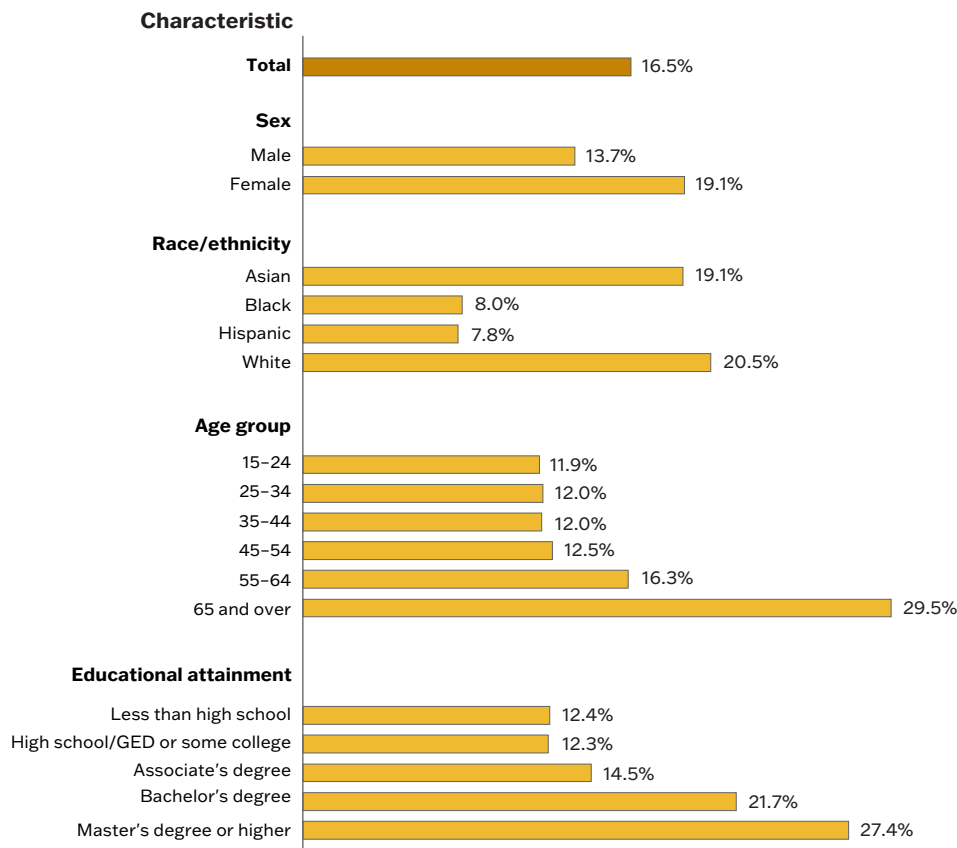
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey (ATUS), 2009–11, 2017–19, and 2022–23.

## Demographic differences among individuals who read for personal interest

There were also differences that could be observed across demographic groups in the frequency of reading for personal interest by Americans in a typical day. In 2022–23, a higher percentage of females reported reading for personal interest (19.1 percent) than did males (13.7 percent; **Figure B4-2**). White (20.5 percent) and Asian (19.1 percent) individuals were more likely to report reading for personal interest than were Black (8.0 percent) or Hispanic (7.8 percent)

individuals. Reading for personal interest was a more popular activity among those aged 65 and over (29.5 percent) and aged 55–64 (16.3 percent) than among those in younger age groups (11.9 percent, 12.0 percent, 12.0 percent, and 12.5 percent for people aged 15–24, 25–34, 35–44, and 45–54, respectively). Individuals with a bachelor’s degree (21.7 percent) or master’s degree or higher (27.4 percent) were also more likely to read for personal interest than those who had not completed high school (12.4 percent), had completed only high school or some college<sup>3</sup> (12.3 percent), or had an associate’s degree (14.5 percent).

**Figure B4-2. Percentage of individuals, aged 15 and over, who read for personal interest on a typical day, by sex and race/ethnicity, age group, and education level: 2022–23**



NOTE: Excludes travel time to reach activity location. Race groups are mutually exclusive; persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race. Data for some racial/ethnic groups are not shown due to small sample sizes. “Some college” includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree. This figure uses two-year averages for estimates of time engaging in the selected arts-related activities. The two-year averages produce more stable estimates than annual estimates because they rely on the combined samples from two different years.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey (ATUS), 2022–23.

<sup>3</sup> “Some college” includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree.

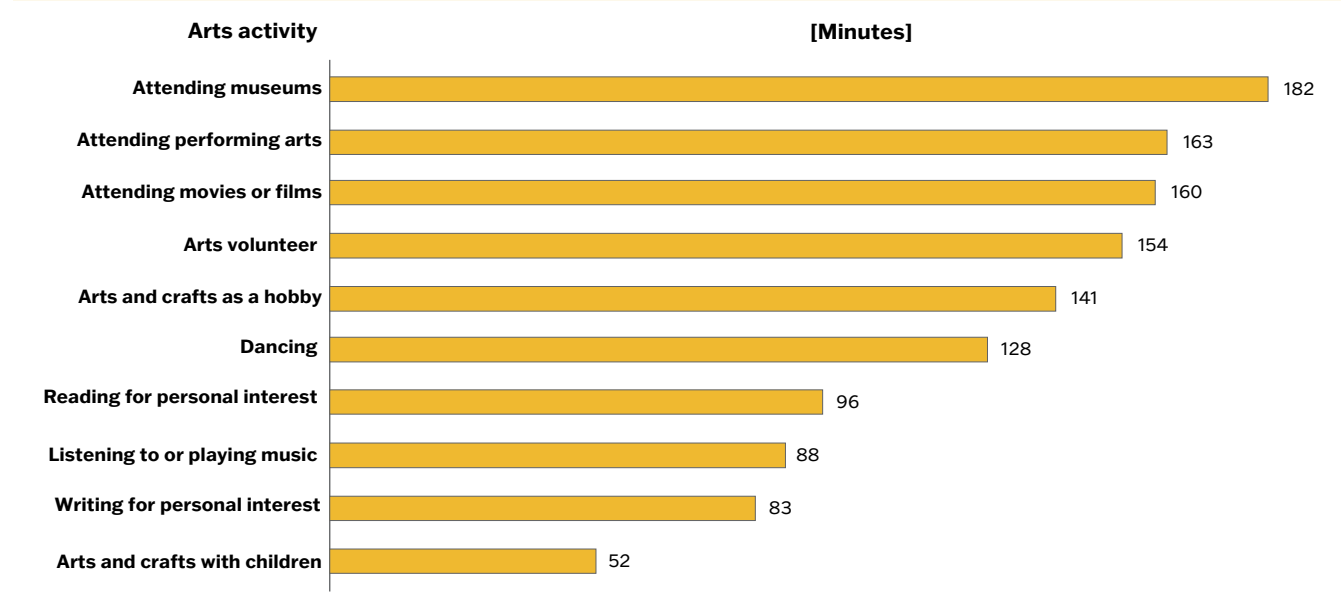
## Time spent on arts activities



Individuals who devoted at least some time to an arts activity tended to spend more than an hour on it (**Figure B4-3**). Those who reported participating in arts and crafts as a hobby on a typical day in 2022–23 spent well over two hours (141 minutes) doing so.

Individuals who reported engaging in arts volunteerism spent 154 minutes on this activity. In 2022–23, museum attendees reported spending 182 minutes per day on the activity, and people writing for personal interest spent 83 minutes doing so. Those who read for personal interest and those who reported listening to or playing music in 2022–23 spent 96 and 89 minutes per day on these activities, respectively.

**Figure B4-3. Amount of time spent per day in selected arts activities among individuals, aged 15 and over, who engaged in those activities: 2022–23**



NOTE: Excludes travel time to reach activity location. This figure uses two-year averages for estimates of time engaging in the selected arts-related activities. The two-year averages produce more stable estimates than annual estimates because they rely on the combined samples from two different years.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey (ATUS), 2022–23.

## Demographic differences in time spent on arts activities

Time spent listening to or playing music was associated with individuals' race/ethnicity, age, and education level. In 2022–23, Asian individuals reported spending less time per day listening to or playing music (66 minutes) than White (87 minutes) individuals (see [Table B4-4](#)). People aged 45–54, 55–64, and 65 and over spent more time per day doing this activity (98 minutes, 110 minutes, and 110 minutes, respectively) than those aged 25–34 (65 minutes) or below 25 (67 minutes). Individuals with a bachelor's degree or a master's degree or higher also spent less time listening to or playing music

(78 minutes and 71 minutes, respectively) than those who had completed only high school or some college (111 minutes).

Time spent doing arts and crafts as a hobby was associated with individuals' sex, age, and education level. Males reported spending more time per day doing this activity (163 minutes), compared to females (126 minutes). Older adults (aged 65 and over) reported spending more time per day on arts and crafts as a hobby (178 minutes) than those aged 35–44 (107 minutes), or below 25 (121 minutes). However, individuals who had not completed high school reported spending less time on arts and crafts as a hobby (101 minutes) than those who had completed high school or some college (163 minutes) or an associate's degree (180 minutes).



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