

**Arts Participation Among Elder Groups and
Current Initiatives to Engage Underserved Sub-Populations**

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Introduction

When arts managers are asked about the most important challenge facing their organizations, many answer, “engaging young audiences” or “courting millennials.” Ways to engage young people is a topic discussed in non-profit sector blog posts, conference tracks, and even university textbooks. In pursuit of the “young and wired,” museums, symphonies, theaters, and other arts organizations across the country have engaged in viral marketing schemes, opened social media accounts, and relaxed dress codes. They have partnered with popular music, tried to become eco-friendly, and introduced happy hours and other fee-free events. Still, a continuing source of consternation is the perceived “graying” of arts audiences. Articles begin with an exhortation for readers to “look around” at fellow concertgoers or museum visitors and realize that “everyone” around them is old and infirm. Is it true that the majority of arts audiences are made up of elders? Even if it is true, why view robust older audiences negatively?

Understanding audience demographics is important for organizations who want to expand their sphere of influence, and for funders who want to direct their money toward specific groups or causes. Funders at all levels of government have an interest in improving the physical, social, and mental wellbeing of their constituents. Participation in the arts is beneficial in these areas, particularly for aging individuals. Numerous studies have reinforced the idea that active participation in the arts and learning promotes physical health, enhances a sense of well-being among older Americans, improves quality of life for those who are ill, and reduces the risk factors that lead to the need for long-term care(Cohen). By funding arts organizations that serve elder populations,

private and government funders can improve health and life for a large and politically significant block of their constituents.

The goal of this paper is to determine the percentage of the arts audience that is age 65 and older and to measure participation rates among the elder population. By understanding participation rates among subgroups within the elder cohort, arts organizations and funders can target specific populations with engagement initiatives. This can allow the arts to flourish, but also can bring increased wellbeing to the elder population, one that is often isolated and neglected. By understanding current engagement initiatives and comparing them with participation rates, I evaluate the likelihood of increased participation among aging Americans in the future and make recommendations on potential areas for change. Social justice and equity through the arts can be pursued as a result.

The assumption among arts organizations and funders that audiences are graying has lead administrators to pursue younger age groups. But arts and aging advocates claim that this turn toward engaging younger audiences comes at the expense of those who need the arts the most, older Americans. This paper asks “what percentage of arts audiences are made up of aging Americans, and who within that demographic group is not participating in arts and culture activities?” For the purposes of this study, aging Americans are defined as people over the age of 65, but the cohort has also been divided into two sub-groups, those aged 65 to 74 and those aged 75 and older.

This topic is important to arts organizations because knowledge of audience demographics is imperative to intentional, targeted marketing and advertising. An organization might approach audience engagement with several goals in mind. A non-

profit may intend to broaden their market to wider audiences. They may wish to deepen audience engagement by enticing existing audiences into greater interaction and commitment to the organization's goals. They may wish to diversify their audience, reaching out to groups who had no previous interest or affiliation with them (McCarthy). It is also important for arts organizations to understand audience trends across the country and how those trends may impact their future. If a common perception about audiences is flawed, data can provide evidence to direct arts organizations toward new goals.

Ageism

In American society, older and retired persons often are victims of ageism. Ageism is stereotyping and discriminating against people because of their age or status as a retired person. Ageism is similar to racism or sexism in that it treats people differently based on stereotypes about a group. Ageism in American culture can be attributed to a number of causes. American culture prizes youth and vitality as highly desirable attributes. These two ideals lead many pursue good health and a youthful appearance. Aging is often viewed as the loss of good health and beauty, resulting in a fear of getting older and, ultimately, of death. Distancing oneself from aging alleviates such fears.

In many countries, the elder population is highly valued, with family members remaining in the home into old age and consulted on their knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, American culture does not embrace these values and instead has institutionalized prejudice. Americans often perpetuate damaging stereotypes about aging by incorporating ageist stereotypes into media and joking negatively about growing older. American slang incorporates ageist terms that portray older people undesirably:

"old fogey," "old fart," "geezer," "old goat." Kathleen Madigan, a comic and producer for Comedy Central and a star of "History of the Joke" on the History Channel, said that unlike race or sex, audiences are almost universally willing to accept jokes about age. "For one thing, it's a common trait — we're all going to get old sometime," Ms. Madigan said" (Bosman).

Attendees at the National Summit on Creativity in Aging identified ageism as a major barrier to good quality of life for older Americans. The white paper from that event illuminates the issue, "Negative attitudes and perceptions about older adults pose a barrier to ensuring that they enjoy a high quality of life. There is a need for a cultural change to combat ageism and call attention to the health and wellness benefits of lifelong arts learning and age-friendly design"(Hanna, "The Summit on Creativity and Aging in America").

Aging Audiences

Negative attitudes among arts organizations about older audiences often are fear-based. Administrators are concerned that once the current generation of aesthetes passes away, art forms will be left without support. The United States' system of non-profit support depends on support from government, foundations, and private citizens. With government, corporate, and foundation support extremely competitive and often intermittent, many organizations largely depend on donations from individuals who have a personal interest in their work. Without a strong, continuous stream of volunteer and financial support, organizations are unsustainable.

It seems that arts institutions have been complaining about aging audiences since data tracking began. In a 1979 research report titled, *Audience Studies of the Performing*

Arts and Museums: A Critical Review, writers lamented that, “There was no indication of any trend toward younger audiences” (DiMaggio, Useem, and Brown). As early as 1989, newspapers reported that Baby Boomers (then aged between 22 and 42) were not supporting the arts as much as older generations. “They take less interest in the arts and support the arts less with money and time than do their elders,” a writer for the *St. Petersburg Times* claimed. Baby Boomers’ lack of interest in the arts seemed poised to spell disaster for nonprofit arts organizations across the country. The article goes on to claim, “...their lack of participation poses a threat to the quality and diversity of the arts as they now exist” (Marger).

Dona Vitale, author of *Finding Your Audience Through Market Segmentation*, writes, “When you analyze your potential audience to identify key segments, you consciously select groups of people you will try to attract to your organization. Your marketing goal is no longer just filling seats or getting people to walk in the door, but attracting the right people with the right message through the right media at the right time with the right product at the right price”(Vitale). Too often, arts organizations limit their marketing to younger audiences in the hope that they will attract groups who will sustain their organization into the future. A report from the Partners for Livable Communities elaborates on organization’s perceived need to engage millennials: “Arts organizations are told they must understand their purpose within a community, reach out through popular channels such as social networking sites, and create programs that are more attractive to the ‘next generation’ of arts audiences” (Partners for Livable Communities). The focus on these audiences is not without merit. Generation Y (people born between 1980 and 2000) is often less engaged than their older counterparts and is considered prime for

development. Evan Sanderson, of the National Center for Creative Aging, also contends that arts agencies concentrate on engaging younger people.

Most arts agencies don't talk about getting older people. They talk about young people and people of color. They often suffer from ageism; they don't want to see older faces in the audience. They do their marketing on social media and they aren't going to hit older people that way. They assume that older people are going to come in anyway (Sanderson).

If age and cohort are strong predictors of arts participation, then it may be possible to better predict the future of cultural audiences by looking at younger cohorts and examining their preferences. Younger adults who get into the habit of attending events, it is hoped, will keep this habit as they age. Viewed this way, the decline of youth interest may indicate a future in jeopardy. In 1979, the NEA released a report espousing the need to engage younger audiences, contending that, "It is ...believed that a young attender may grow up to be an old attender and, while the link between attendance in one's youth and in one's prime has not yet been fully described, arts managers often view a young audience with an optimistic eye to the future" (DiMaggio, Useem, and Brown).

However, arts and cultural organizations should not neglect the older generations and other growth markets where their impact may be greater. By overlooking these groups, arts organizations not only lose out on potential audiences; they show young people that their value has an expiration date. Gay Hanna elaborates on instances of poor treatment of older adults by some organizations.

I've watched arts organizations throw their older people under the bus. The Hirshhorn literally fired their older volunteers who had given a lifetime of commitment and service. It was so stupid to insult them that way. It speaks to the younger people that, "they only want me when I'm younger." Ageism is rampant in this country, and how do we fight ageism? Many of these programs who get rid of old people are abominable. They weren't old when they walked in, they were young people then (Hanna, "Interview").

Not only museums like the Hirshhorn have a history with ageist policies. Teresa Eyring, executive director of The Theatre Communications Group points out that performing arts venues also need to pivot away from devaluing their older attendees. In an interview with the Boston Globe, Eyring said, “(I) think that theaters should love their audiences, whoever their audiences are. ... There’s something wrong with the idea that there’s something wrong with audiences that are older. Theater should be for everyone” (Aucoin).

Baby Boomers

"A colleague of mine says the audience isn't greying, it's always been grey," says Eyring (The Canberra Times). There are compelling reasons why seeing grey hair in the audience is nothing new and not necessarily a cause for panic; there has always been "new grey" waiting in the wings to replace the old. But a rising cohort of retired Americans, the Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964), requires new thinking about aging. This group, the largest demographic group in history, has effected dramatic social and political change in their lifetimes and continues to do so in retirement. They are demonstrating that being active and engaged throughout the later years of life is possible and that including elders should be viewed as an opportunity for robust growth in the arts sector, rather than an impediment.

With the aging of the Baby Boomer cohort, the perception of aging is changing. This demographic group, known for its large population and commitment to social change, are living lengthier, healthful lives and are remaining active well into the retirement years. “Old age, once considered a time of frailty and loss, is becoming a time of potential, with people living longer, healthier lives with new meaning and purpose”

(Cohen). Over the next two decades, the United States will undergo a major demographic shift as the Boomers age and older adults become a larger portion of the population. The number of people over the age of 65 will double to more than 72 million by 2030.

Compared to previous generations, this group is much more likely to live into their 70s, 80s, and 90s. By 2030, one in every five Americans will be older than 65 and ten million people will be older than 85 (Partners for Livable Communities).

As harbingers of social change, the Baby Boomers have brought about lasting cultural transformation, ended a war, and ushered in an era of consumerism and self-indulgence. It comes as no surprise that their ability to rapidly induce change is continuing into their retirement years. In fact, Boomers are more likely to keep working after age 65, the country's traditional age for retirement (Partners for Livable Communities). Economically, while there are significant levels of poverty in the older population, a large share of the wealth in the United States is held by people 50 years old and older. These active, wealthy Americans may be considered an opportunity to increase overall participation in benchmark arts activities. Gay Hanna, Executive Director of the National Center for Creative Aging believes that now is the time for society to change its attitudes toward aging people. "There weren't expectations of older adults in the past. We must not underestimate the desire of people to be actively and meaningfully engaged at the later stages of life" (Hanna, "Interview").

Research Method

Many arts organizations depend on small studies of their constituents based on ticket buyer data or city-wide studies to determine the make up of their audiences. This

paper uses a broad set of data to analyze participation in the arts nationally. By establishing overall trends in participation among elder groups, it affords a wider view of the field and provides in-depth analysis of participation among the elders. By establishing who is not currently participating in benchmark arts consumption, we can specify potential target groups for funding and outreach.

The National Endowment for the Arts' Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) is the largest periodic survey of adult involvement in arts and cultural activities in the United States. The NEA has issued reports and important findings from SPPA for over 25 years. The NEA not only reports the survey results as a whole, but also makes SPPA data files available to arts and cultural researchers for their own analyses and publications through the National Archive of Data on Arts and Culture. In addition to reporting arts participation through arts attendance, the SPPA addresses arts participation in its survey through several different modules. The topics of these modules include accessing and creating arts through media, creating and performing in the arts, participating in sports activities, and arts learning. This paper analyzes SPPA data to find out who is attending benchmark arts activities. Benchmark arts activities are defined as jazz or classical music concerts, opera, plays, ballet and other dance performances or visits to art museums or galleries (Office of Research & Analysis). Although the SPPA tracks American's interactions with the arts through attendance, participation, and creation, this paper concentrates its analysis on benchmark arts attendance. The two main populations studied are 65-74 and 75+. There is also analysis of education level, income level, race, citizenship status, and working status within that cohort.

According to *How a Nation Engages with Art: Highlights from the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, nearly half of all U.S. adults attended a visual or performing arts event in the previous year. 49 percent of adults or 115 million people participated in a benchmark arts activity. Figure 1¹ shows participation rates of U.S. adults at benchmark arts activities since the first year of the survey in 1982.

Table 1 shows attendance rates among US adults for benchmark arts disciplines in the years 2002, 2008, and 2012.² Between 2008 and 2012, national rates of attendance at visual and performing arts activities dropped slightly, remaining below 2002 levels. A closer look at individual disciplines shows that theater attendance (musical and non-musical play-going) has declined significantly since 2008. So did the share of adults visiting art museums or galleries or attending crafts fairs or visual arts festivals (Office of Research & Analysis). With decreased levels of attendance come decreased levels of financial and volunteer support. Arts administrators may worry about the declining trends of arts participation and how it will affect the future of their organizations.

Table 2 shows 2012 attendance rates by age. Elder groups do not make up a majority of audiences in any discipline. The two age groups with the highest rates of participation are highlighted in orange. The most active participants are the 55-64 age group followed by the 45-54 age group with the 25-34 age group coming in third. In fact, the participation percentages of people over the age of 75 are drastically lower than all other groups in most cases.

¹ See Appendix for all tables and figures

² Because the statistics represent such a large number of constituents, changes in attendance numbers are significant to two tenths of a percentage point.

Table 3 shows the attendance rates among elder groups aged 65-74 and 75+ at benchmark art activities in 2012 and proportion of the overall audience represented by each age group's as well as the U.S. population. It is important to note that attendance at individual benchmark arts activities is low across all age groups, but often is particularly low among elders. Many arts activities, including Jazz, Salsa, Opera, Ballet, and Dance are seeing single digit percentages of attendance among elders.

Figure 2 shows how many people aged 65-74 and 75+ attended benchmark arts activities in 2012 compared to how many people in the overall population were aged 65-74 and 75+ in 2012. The horizontal lines show each group's overall percentage of the U.S. population. If the bars for each arts activity rise above the line, the group is overrepresented in that category. If the bars fall below the line, the group is underrepresented. In this case we can see that the difference between the two elder groups is significant. The younger half of the cohort has higher attendance rates that are more closely aligned with their proportion of the population. The elder half of the cohort reaches lower levels and is only above average in Opera and Classical genres.

Adjusting for population demographics

For his NEA report *Age and Arts Participation: A Case Against Demographic Destiny*, Mark J. Stern of the Social Impact of the Arts Program at the University of Pennsylvania created an index of representativeness that can be used to measure the over- or underrepresentation of a particular age group compared with its share of the total population. When the index is zero, the composition of the arts audience precisely reflects that of the population. If the index is positive, a group is overrepresented; if negative, it is underrepresented. "For example, if 33.1 percent of the audience is under

the age of 30, but 29.7 percent of the entire population is in this age group, then the index of representativeness for those under the age of 30 would be $((33.1/29.7*100) - 100)$, or 11” (Stern). Table 4 takes the data presented in Table 3 and applies this formula.

Some researchers contend that targeting groups for funding by age is unnecessary. Mark Stern argues that age has little to do with participation. Stern believes that since arts education is the most important influence on arts participation, funders should be more skeptical about the impact of other variables, especially age. “...while it is certainly true that the audiences for many art forms tracked by the SPPA are aging more rapidly than the U.S. population, ...age and generational cohort differences account for less than 1 percent of the variance in the total number of arts events that Americans attended over the period of 1982–2008” (Stern). He discounts the notion of “demographic destiny” when it comes to arts engagement. The National Endowment for the Arts’ conference paper, *Arts and Older Americans* also challenges the idea that age can predict participation. They write, “Studies show that older adults are no more homogeneous than any other age group, so any generalization about older people is dangerous”(National Endowment for the Arts). Their report suggests looking at various segments of the older population and determining marketing strategies for each group individually. These groups may include the young-old, old-old, vigorous, frail, independent, those needing partial or full outside care, the well-educated, grade and high school dropouts, etc.

Certain groups within the older cohort are significantly underserved. These groups include less educated people, people with lower incomes, immigrants, the disabled, people who are not white and much of the older half of the cohort, aged 75 and up. In recent years many funding groups have pivoted to social justice and equity goals to

reach these populations. There may be evidence that these groups participate in the arts through non-benchmark activities like church choirs, crafting, or quilting circles, but these forms of arts attendance are outside the scope of this paper.

According to SPPA data, education is the strongest predictor of arts participation among all demographic groups. Audiences for jazz, classical, opera, musicals, plays, ballet, museums, crafts fairs, and music festivals typically have at least some college, and increased education tends to correlate with increased attendance (DiMaggio, Useem, and Brown). College graduates were more than twice as likely to attend arts activities than those with only a high school diploma in many fields. The only fields that did not follow this trend were salsa and dance. Sociologist Aaron Reeves of the University of Oxford suggests that the correlation between education and arts attendance may be explained by the concept of colleges as incubators of culture. Reeves posits that students who have experienced the arts through education are more likely to appreciate and seek out cultural experiences (Jacobs).

This paper will use jazz performance attendance as an example of the trends seen in participation amongst elder groups. Jazz is neither the least nor most popular arts activity among all age groups and has tracked consistently with attendance trends since the NEA began collecting data in 1982. Figure 3 shows the relationship between education level and people who attended a live jazz performance. Those who attended were more likely to have graduated college and received an advanced degree.

Education level and income appear to track similarly. On average, people whose income rose above \$75,000/yr saw a jump in arts attendance levels of more than ten percentage points. Figure 4 shows similar attendance numbers among each income group.

But people in higher income brackets represent a significantly smaller segment of the population. Figure 5 uses Stern's index of representativeness (IOR), and shows the strong correlation between income level and arts participation.

The data indicate high levels of arts attendance among elder whites, with little divergence across genre. Although whites make up 85.5% and 86.9% of each age cohort, they represent more than 90% of attendees in nearly all categories. In the 65-74 age cohort, blacks attended jazz performances at higher than expected rates, with an IOR of 30, but at lower rates in all other categories. Their attendance was especially low in opera and ballet, where they represented 0% of attendance. In the 75+ cohort there was less disparity between black attendance and the black population. American Indian and Asian elder groups attended most genres in low numbers, although Asian Americans were overrepresented classical music attendance in both age groups.

Foreign born, naturalized citizens older than 75 were overrepresented in their attendance at jazz performances and, in both age groups, were incredibly active in salsa, representing 22% of all salsa attendance (See tables 6a and 6b.) The high attendance rate at salsa performances may be explained by a higher rate of Hispanic immigration in recent decades or by high rates of cultural engagement among Hispanic groups. The abundance is significant, and so is lack of attendance by native-born U.S. citizens. Foreign-born immigrants who are not citizens of the United States were disinclined to attend any benchmark arts activities other than of salsa. This may correlate to lower education levels and average incomes in this group.

Elder immigrant populations seemed particularly disinterested in musical plays and traditional theater. Their lack of engagement with musicals is interesting considering

musicals' overall popularity with the majority of groups. Musicals and dance are two fields that generally see consistent audiences. Elder immigrants' reluctance to attend these performances may be related to inexperience with the English language, a lack of familiarity with American cultural references, or a discomfort with unfamiliar codes of deportment in elite cultural venues. The low rates of non-citizen arts engagement are particularly important because the immigrant population is projected to increase dramatically in the coming decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, "International migration is projected to surpass natural increase (births minus deaths) as the principal driver of U.S. population growth by the middle of this century. This scenario would mark the first time that natural increase was not the leading cause of population increase since at least 1850, when the census began collecting information about residents' country of birth" (U.S. Census Bureau).

Employment status may not be the first category that comes to mind when considering aging groups. Common knowledge might assume that the majority of elders are retired or disabled. In fact, 67% of the 65-74 year old cohort is retired and 89% of the 75+ cohort is retired. However, those who still are employed are shown to be highly likely to attend arts activities. This is represented by attendees of plays who are ages 65-74. 19.5 percent of 65-74 year olds are employed, but 21.9 percent of play audiences are 65-74 and employed. The IOR is $((21.9/19.5*100)-100)$, or 12, showing that this group is significantly overrepresented. These energetic older adults represent a group of people whose activity aligns more closely to that of younger groups. The Baby Boomer cohort is anticipated to show similar rates of activity as they age. In contrast, people of that age who are retired show reduced rates of attendance, tracking under expected levels. Table

5a shows that rates of attendance among retired 65-74 year olds are lower than expected in most genres. The genres where 65-74 year olds are over represented in attendance are highlighted in orange. Disabled elders are attending in numbers much lower than expected, with an average IOR of -83.

Age and Social Justice

Data from the SPPA show that elders who are not experiencing the arts include the less educated, low income, minorities, immigrants, and the disabled, all groups who are being targeted by funders who focus on equity in the arts. Using the knowledge that age is not the only deciding factor in arts attendance, many groups have been using their cultural and monetary capital to pursue social justice initiatives. Funders with dual missions in the arts and social change are emerging in the field. They believe that creative expression and cultural activism can be used to advance goals of human rights and equality. “More arts funders, particularly state and local arts agencies, are addressing community, social, and cultural equity issues with changes to grant programs, guidelines, and allocations. Grantmakers that support individual artists are following the lead of artists and developing ways to serve an increasing number of artists who devise projects with both aesthetic and social dimensions” (Korza and Bacon). These funders often find alternative groups to direct their outreach, ignoring the demographics of age. These groups often include women, minorities, new immigrants, and LGBTQ groups. Beth Bienvenu, Director of the Office of Accessibility at the NEA states that federal funders also have a strong concern for social justice and racial equality:

Arts organizations don't focus as much on developing older audiences because we have the perception that older audiences already exist. But one of the

things we're really trying to do is more outreach into low income and underserved areas. The stereotype of the wealthier older white adult -- they're already there. They're the ones who attend opera and theater and museums. Engaging older adults from minority groups and underserved areas and low-income areas -- that's where we really want to see investment. It's part of our overall strategy to fund projects in every community and ensure that we're reaching underserved populations.

Americans for the Arts' recent report, *Trend or Tipping Point: Arts and Social Change Grantmaking* confirms that there now are more than 150 funders active in social justice funding in the arts. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) has identified more than 140 arts funders who gave at least 20 percent of their funding to benefit marginalized communities. This growing association of funders is responding in creative ways to changes in the United States' demographic profile (Sidford). The older population is also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse as the overall minority population grows and experiences greater longevity. Racial and ethnic minority populations have increased from 6.3 million in 2003 (17.5% of the elder population) to 9.5 million in 2013 (21.2% of elders) and are projected to increase to 21.1 million in 2030 (28.5% of older adults) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Funding to minority groups is increasing over time, but, Sidford writes, "every arts and culture-focused foundation, regardless of mission, can make equity a core principle of its grantmaking by paying more attention to the people who will benefit from its grants and the processes by which the arts and culture provide those benefits" (Sidford). By targeting racial and ethnic minority populations with engagement initiatives and funding, organizations may also increase the levels of elder participation. Much of the elder cohort who is not participating comes from these groups.

Until recently, funding for the equitable engagement of older American's has not been a priority. Advocates for elder groups have been forced to pursue new research and statistical data to prove the worthiness of their cause. At the Summit for Creativity and Aging in America, attendees emphasized that one of the barriers to engaging elders in the arts is the lack of reputable studies on the health benefits of arts. The Summit white paper states:

There is not only a need for arts learning across the lifespan, but also a physiological and mental health benefit for older adult participants. But arts in the field of aging is a new, evolving field, and there are inequities and challenges. There is a dearth of literature that addresses older adults as lifelong learners and participants in the arts. Our society does not generally have a strong commitment in this area. Moreover, arts and aging have existed as two separate entities, leading to a fractured approach often not sensitive to cultural specificity and diversity.

However, social justice initiatives may prove to be catalysts in engaging older populations. By targeting groups that are underserved as a whole, including groups with low income and low levels of education, the segments of older adults who are not participating may become active in the arts. The overall rates of participation among older adults may be raised as a result.

A Focus on Engagement

Over the last few years, the NEA has begun to pivot away from funding organizations who perceive elder groups as passive audience members. They prioritize lifelong learning in the arts and are focusing on funding programs that actively engage older Americans as creators. In 2009, The NEA awarded 14 grants to organizations that created programming that engages older adults in activities such as poetry writing,

songwriting, and mentoring of younger musicians in both urban and rural settings (Hanna, Noelker, and Bienvenu).

During the 2015 Summit on Creative Aging in America the NEA continued to hone its policies on arts engagement among elders. A Pre-Conference to the 2015 White House Conference on Aging brought together experts from the fields of aging, the arts, and design to identify possible solutions to issues surrounding healthy aging and arts participation. The conference focused on three key areas: Age-Friendly Community Design, Health and Wellness and the Arts, and Lifelong Learning and Engagement in the Arts. They identified using the arts as a tool for active engagement as a major need in the field moving forward. They identified the need to create,

cultural change to create a positive alteration in the public perception of older people and their ability to be generative through arts learning and engagement throughout the life span [and]...leadership advocacy for equitable public policy to support funding for access to lifelong learning and engagement in the arts, including intergenerational arts programs and services for underserved communities.

Beth Bienvenu agrees that federal funding is currently moving away from models of that emphasize passive arts attendance.

The way that we support the field is through our grants ...we support creative aging projects. That's engaging older adults in the creation of arts. Whether it's through classes or choirs or dance classes or any of those things ... we're trying to get away from the projects that just go into nursing homes and perform. We want engagement.

While federal initiatives and policies lay the groundwork for ideas about arts engagement, the NEA works with the state arts agencies to implement best practices and create programs that involve older adults. Bienvenu emphasizes that states play a pivotal role in the process, "A big percentage of our budget goes to the states and we see them as

the outreach arm of what we do. We're trying to support the states in helping their arts organizations and their populations with various ways to build arts audiences” (Bienvenu). Evan Sanderson, a fellow with the National Center for Creative Aging, has been coordinating efforts to link state arts agencies across the country. Through webinars, phone interviews and conferences with arts representatives from 41 states, Evan has helped to create the engage initiative, a website outlining the best practices for state arts agencies (SAS) who are looking to engage aging Americans in the arts. This project has effectively made Evan a specialist in the field of arts and aging at the state level. He emphasizes that states are interested the engagement of elders in the art making process over arts attendance. He says “State arts agencies are particularly interested in people becoming artists because it relates directly to health” (Sanderson). He also revealed that SAS’ grantmaking is typically set aside for teaching opportunities and creating programs that bring in older people.

They don't care about getting people in the doors of theatres. They care about creating art and speaking about what it means to be older in America. For example, what is it like to experience dementia? The states tend to want to fund work and create work that reflects their constituent's experience. (Sanderson)

Evan also emphasizes that many states are interested in engaging rural populations and groups with low socio economic standing. According to the states, the most important groups to engage within the aging population are people with cognitive disorders, and those who are less active and low functioning. These same groups have been shown to have some of the lowest rates of participation in benchmark arts activities (see Table 5). He states, “The states want to make programs that appeal to (aging adults) and are about them. Programs should confirm their status as keepers of culture and as valuable parts of the community” (Sanderson). The challenges that states are

encountering involve enacting programs with limited budgets and staff. “Some states don’t have arts agencies. Some have funding freezes and can’t do anything. Some are extremely understaffed. Other states are just staying afloat” (Sanderson). We will have to see whether these engagement programs help arts organizations to overcome the underserved sections of the elder population.

Conclusion

As audience composition changes, so must arts organizations and funders. Over the last decade, what the public wants and needs from benchmark arts activities has transformed. According to Gay Hanna, “What it means to be an arts organization has changed. The concept of audience has changed. The concept of audience is going to go away. People want to be engaged. Just sitting and watching is not what people want out of the arts anymore” (Hanna, “Interview”). Social justice and equity among grantees is a rising critical issue in the nonprofit world. Many arts funders are beginning to adjust who and what they fund in an attempt to encourage the engagement of minority groups. Advocacy groups are calling for the funding of active participation and engagement initiatives for older Americans. The practice of funding art for art’s sake may be declining. Coinciding with the shift in attitudes of arts funding, Baby Boomers are altering the way the world sees older people. They are creating a new generation of active elders, who will demand that arts organizations provide programming to engage them as artists, writers, teachers, and creators. All non-profits are being held to a higher standard of service to their communities. In order to receive funding in the future, arts organizations will have to prove that they are actively and positively influencing their

communities with special attention to accessibility, equity, and active participation. Arts organizations must review their mission and values statements to ensure that in this new era, in which engagement is as important as attendance, they are not left behind.

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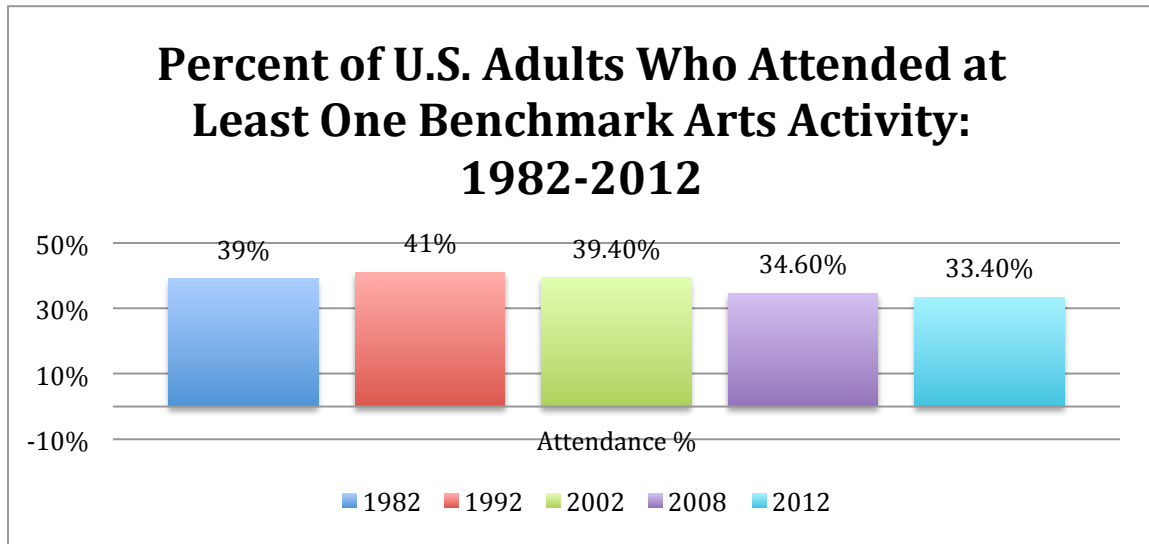
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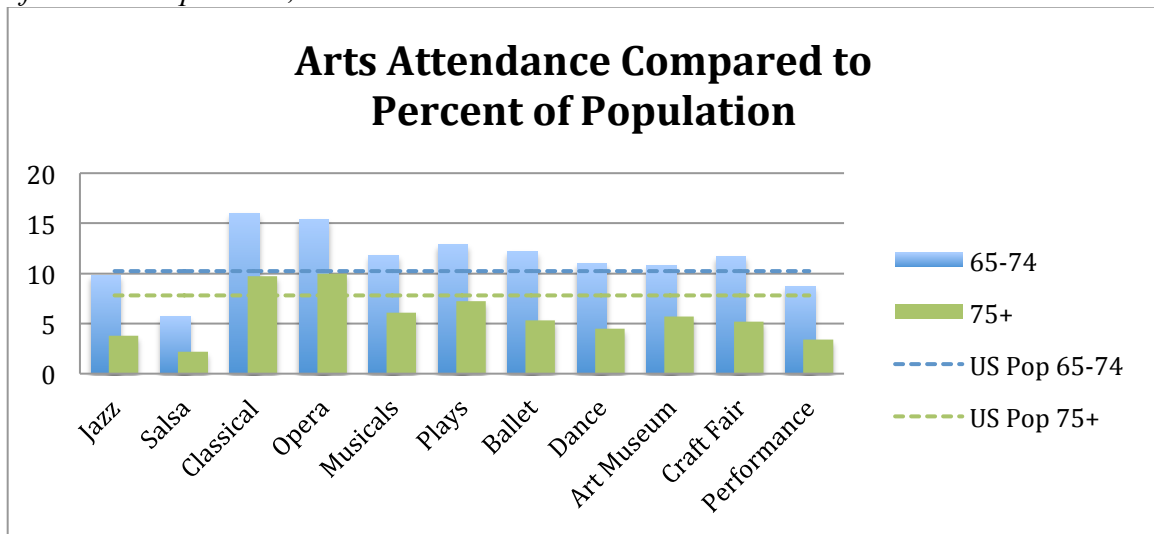
Appendix

Figure 1: Benchmark Arts Attendance among U.S. Adults 1982-2012



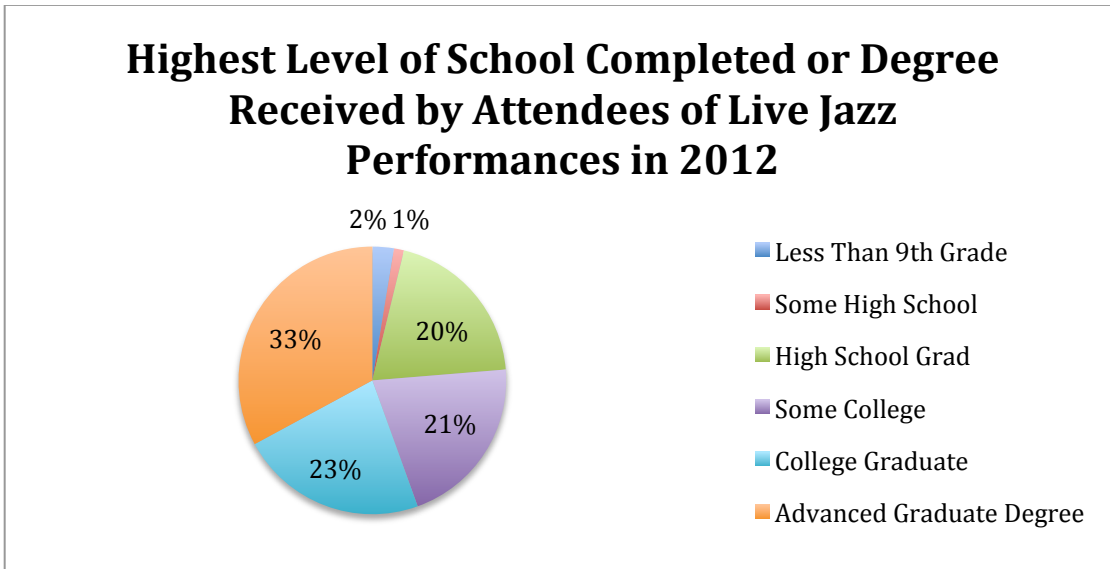
Source: NEA SPPA

Figure 2: Adults aged 65-74 and 75+ Attendance at Arts Activities Compared to Percent of Overall Population, 2012



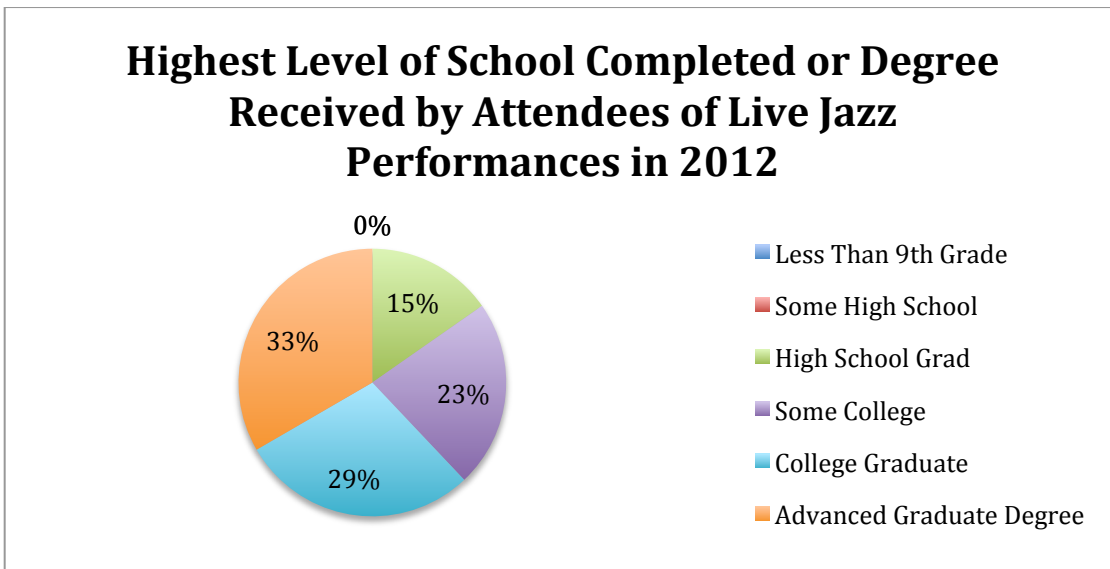
Source: NEA SPPA

Figure 3a: *Highest Level of School Completed by Attendees of Live Jazz Aged 65-74,2012*



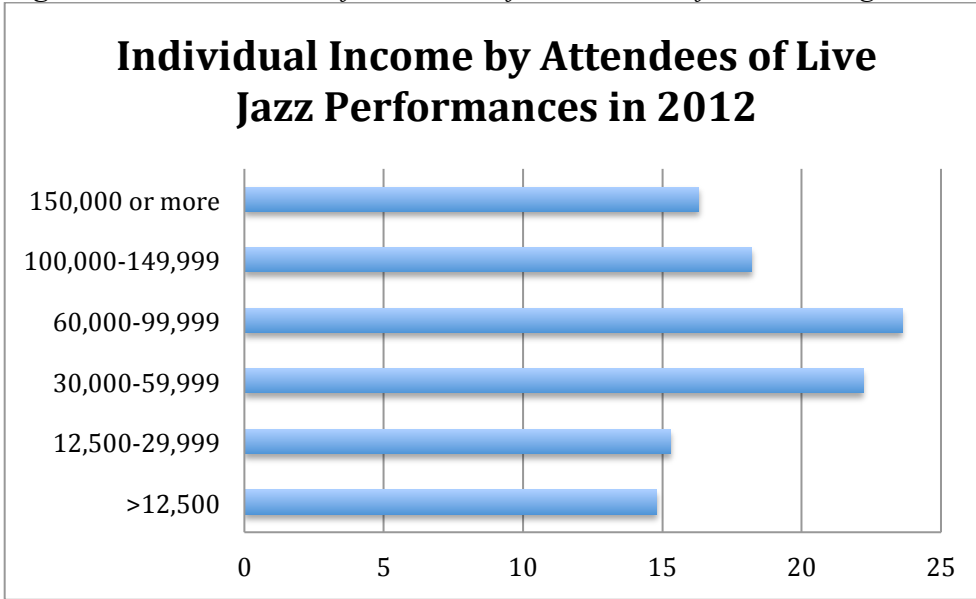
Source: NEA SPPA data.

Figure 3b: *Highest Level of School Completed by Attendees of Live Jazz Aged 75+,2012*



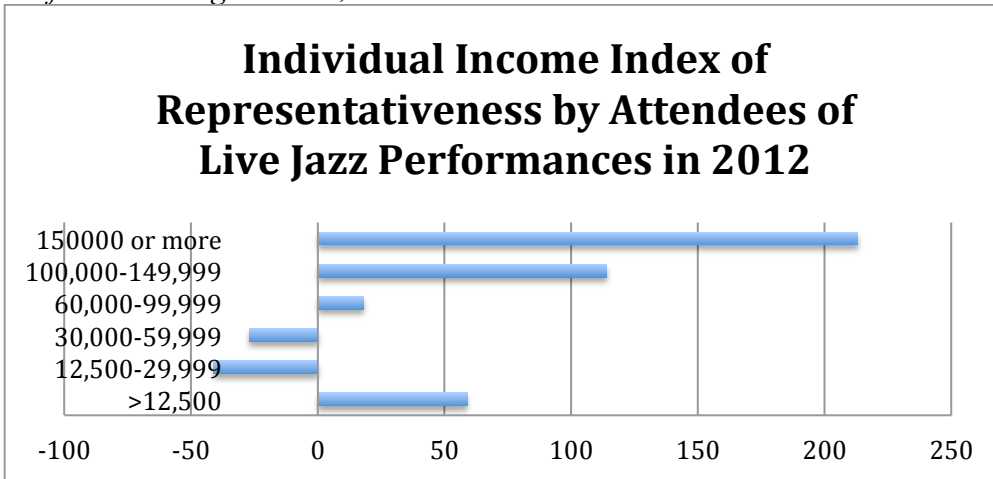
Source: NEA SPPA data.

Figure 4: *Income Levels of Attendees of Live Jazz Performances Aged 65-74, 2012*



Source: NEA 2012 SPPA

Figure 5: *Index of Representativeness: Income Levels of Attendees of Live Jazz Performances Aged 65-74, 2012*



Source: NEA 2012 SPPA

Table 1: Arts Attendance Among U.S. adults (%) 2008-2012

	2002	2008	2012
Jazz	10.8	7.8	8.1
Salsa	--	4.9	5.1
Classical	11.6	9.3	8.8
Opera	3.2	2.1	2.1
Musicals	17.1	16.7	15.2
Plays	12.3	9.4	8.3
Ballet	3.9	2.9	2.7
Dance	6.3	5.2	5.6
Art Museum	26.5	22.7	21
Craft Fair	33.4	24.5	22.4
Performance Festival	--	20.8	20.8

Source: NEA SPPA

Table 2: U.S. Adult Attendance at Benchmark Arts Activities by Age Group, 2012

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
Jazz	14.5	17.2	16.2	18.3	20.2	9.8	3.8	100
Salsa	17.9	21.8	18.6	17	16.7	5.7	2.2	100
Classical	9.7	14.5	12.2	17.4	20.5	16	9.7	100
Opera	10.6	18.6	9.6	15	20.8	15.4	10	100
Musicals	11	15.7	14.3	20.7	20.5	11.8	6.1	100
Plays	9.8	15.8	15	21.4	17.9	12.9	7.2	100
Ballet	11.2	19.9	17.2	15.9	18.3	12.2	5.3	100
Dance	13.9	16.1	17.5	18.3	18.6	11	4.5	100
Art Museum	11.1	18.4	17.1	19.5	17.5	10.8	5.7	100
Craft Fair	10.4	16.8	16.6	20.4	18.8	11.7	5.2	100
Performance Festival	15.5	19.4	17.4	19.3	16.3	8.7	3.4	100

Source: NEA SPPA

*Groups with highest attendance rates highlighted in orange.

Table 3: Attendance at Benchmark Arts Activities among Adults Aged 65-74 and 75+, 2012

Age	Response	Jazz	Salsa	Clas.	Op.	Msl.	Play	Blft.	Dnc.	A.M.	C.F.	P.F.	U.S. Pop
65-74	Yes	7.9	2.9	13.9	3.2	17.7	10.6	3.3	6.1	22.4	26.1	17.9	
	% Overall	9.8	5.7	16	15.4	11.8	12.9	12.2	11	10.8	11.7	8.7	10.1
75+	Yes	3.9	1.5	10.9	2.7	11.9	7.8	1.9	3.3	15.5	15	9	
	% Overall	3.8	2.2	9.7	10	6.1	7.2	5.3	4.5	5.7	5.2	3.4	7.8

Source: NEA SPPA

*Activities where elders are underrepresented highlighted in blue.

Table 4: Representativeness of Benchmark Arts Attenders Aged 65-74 and 75+ Compared to the U.S. Population, 2012

Age	Jazz	Salsa	Clas.	Opera	Music	Plays	Ballet	Dance	A.M.	C.F.	P.F.
65-74	-9	-47	48	42	9	19	12	1	0	8	-19
75+	-51	-71	24	28	-21	-7	-32	-42	-26	-33	-56

Source: NEA SPPA

Table 5a: Employment Status among Attenders of Benchmark Arts Activities Aged 65-74, 2012

	Employed	Absent	Unemployed: Layoff	Unemployed: Looking	Retired	Disabled
Jazz	28.6	2.5	0.6	0.3	58.3	1.0
Salsa	31.5	1.5	0.0	4.5	59.0	0.3
Classical	24.2	2.2	0.2	0.6	53.9	0.5
Opera	29.1	4.3	0.5	0.0	50.6	0.7
Musicals	22.6	2.6	0.5	0.9	57.8	0.6
Plays	25.6	3.4	0.3	1.1	54.0	0.7
Ballet	27	3.0	0.1	0.0	52.0	0.4
Dance	25.1	3.5	0.3	0.1	69.3	0.3
Art	25.4	2.9	0.3	1.1	55.1	0.7
Museum						
Craft Fair	23.5	2.0	0.4	1.2	66.1	1.0
Performance Festival	29.4	2.6	0.2	1.6	64.4	0.8
% of Pop	18.6	1.6	0.3	0.7	57.6	3.9

Source: NEA SPPA

*Overrepresented groups highlighted in orange

Table 5b: Employment Status Among Attenders of Benchmark Arts Activities Aged 75+, 2012

	Employed	Absent	Unemployed: Layoff	Unemployed: Looking	Retired	Disabled
Jazz	10.8	2.6	0.8	0	79.1	1.4
Salsa	6.2	5.7	0	5.0	83.1	0
Classical	11.3	1.4	0.3	0	72.5	0.9
Opera	12.7	1.5	0	0	73.5	1.6
Musicals	9.3	1.5	0	0.1	76.9	0.4
Plays	9.3	1.5	0	0.4	73.9	0.3
Ballet	11.5	2.6	0	0	68.0	1.5
Dance	9.4	3.2	0	0	87.4	0
Art Museum	10.3	1.5	0.2	0.5	73.7	1.4
Craft Fair	7.3	1.7	0	0	85.0	1.1
Performance Festival	7.2	3.9	0	0	89.0	0
% of Pop	5.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	73.4	4.9

Source: NEA SPPA

*Overrepresented groups highlighted in orange

Table 6a: Citizenship Status among Attenders of Benchmark Arts Activities Aged 65-74, 2012

	Native Born USA	Native Born Puerto Rico	Native Born Abroad	Naturalized Citizen	Not a Citizen
Jazz	93.6	1.5	0	3.7	1.2
Salsa	68.2	7.1	4.4	16.4	3.8
Classical	88.8	0.2	0.9	8.4	1.7
Opera	88.1	0	2.0	9.3	0.6
Musicals	93.9	0.2	1.2	2.9	1.8
Plays	93.6	0	1.3	3.6	1.5
Ballet	83.4	0	2.0	14.2	0.4
Dance	89.8	0	1.1	6.9	2.0
Art Museum	91.4	0	1.0	5.1	2.6
Craft Fair	91.8	0.4	0.7	6.5	0.5
Performance Festival	89.6	1.5	0.8	6.6	1.5
% of Pop	86.7	0.7	0.6	8.7	3.3

Source: NEA SPPA

*Overrepresented groups highlighted in orange

6b: Citizenship Status among Attenders of Benchmark Arts Activities Aged 75+, 2012

	Native Born USA	Native Born Puerto Rico	Native Born Abroad	Naturalized Citizen	Not a Citizen
Jazz	90.2	0	0	7.7	2.1
Salsa	63.5	0	0	33.1	3.3
Classical	91.4	0	0.7	7.1	0.9
Opera	87.1	0	1.7	9.7	1.5
Musicals	93.6	0	0.5	4.3	1.6
Plays	93.1	0	0.9	6.6	1.2
Ballet	89.7	0	0	8.9	1.4
Dance	89.8	0	0	9.1	1.1
Art Museum	89.0	0	0.2	10.1	0.7
Craft Fair	91.0	0	0.4	8.1	0.5
Performance Festival	90.8	0	0	7.3	1.9
% of Pop	88.2	0.4	0.5	8.2	2.7

Source: NEA SPPA

*Overrepresented groups highlighted in orange