

Creating Our Future

Results of the National Arts Participation Survey

New South Wales highlights



Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey is the fourth report in a landmark series by the Australia Council for the Arts, building on the 2009, 2013 and 2016 editions.

The National Arts Participation Survey is a cornerstone of our evidence base. It provides vital new evidence about the essential role that arts and creativity play in Australian communities, showing the arts are a public good infused and embedded in the fabric of our daily lives.

Creating Our Future evidences Australians' strong and growing support for public funding, our growing recognition of the central importance of First Nations arts to Australia's culture, the importance of arts and creativity in child development and education. It also evidences the power of the arts to fuel our talent pipeline and jobs growth, while supporting social cohesion and wellbeing.

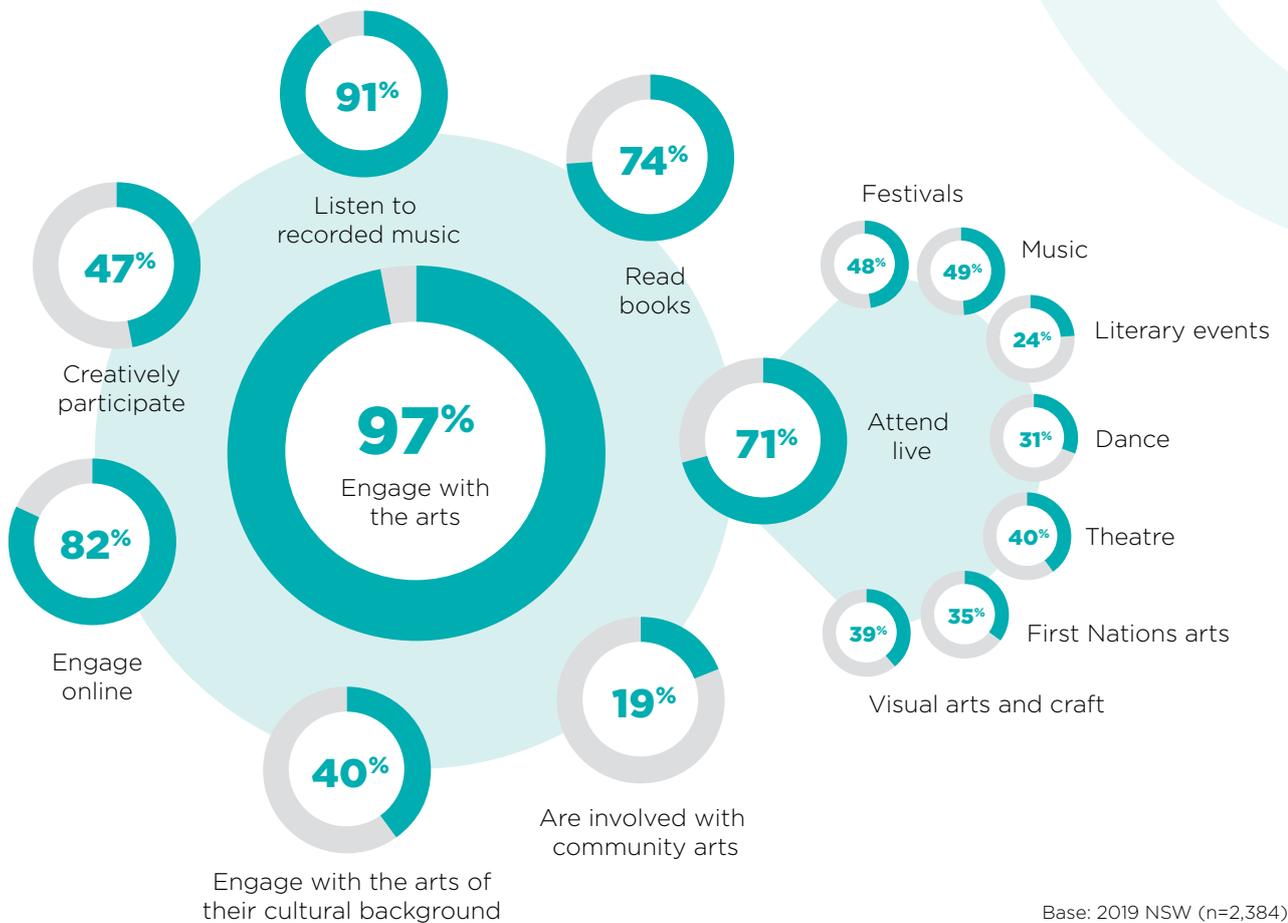
The survey was conducted not long before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our world, lives and the cultural and creative industries. The survey results provide a benchmark of Australians' arts engagement before the impacts of the pandemic, providing much needed information as doors reopen, audiences are rebuilt and the cultural and creative industries are re-ignited.

For the full report and online resources see:

<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/creating-our-future>

This fact sheet provides an overview of results for NSW.

Figure 1: NSW residents' arts engagement in 2019



Impacts of the arts

More Australians now recognise the many positive impacts the arts have on our daily lives and in our communities.

- More NSW residents now believe the arts have a ‘big’ or ‘very big’ impact on:
 - their **ability to express themselves** (66%, up from 54% in 2016)
 - **stimulating their minds** (66%, up from 55% in 2016)
 - **child development** (64%, up from 47% in 2016)
 - their **ability to think creatively and develop new ideas** (63%, up from 53% in 2016)
 - their **understanding of other people and cultures** (61%, up from 51% in 2016)
 - **helping them deal with stress, anxiety or depression** (58%, up from 43% in 2016)
 - their **sense of wellbeing and happiness** (58%, up from 43% in 2016)
 - **shaping and expressing Australian identity** (55%, up from 43% in 2016)
 - **building creative skills that will be necessary for the future workforce** (50%, new in 2019)
 - **bringing customers to local businesses** (44%, up from 30% in 2016).

Attitudes about the arts

Following a shift in some attitudes towards ambivalence in 2016 (respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing with attitude statements), NSW residents' attitudes about the arts are now less ambivalent and increasingly positive.

More NSW residents now agree that:

- **artists should have freedom of expression** (77%, up from 61% in 2016)
- **the arts should be an important part of education** (75%, up from 61% in 2016)
- **artists make an important contribution to Australian society** (74%, up from 64% in 2016)
- **the arts in Australia reflect the diversity of cultures present in Australia** (73%, up from 63% in 2016)
- **the arts help them to understand perspectives that are different to your own** (72%, up from 60% in 2016)
- **the arts allow them to connect with others** (57%, up from 37% in 2016)
- **there are plenty of opportunities for them to get involved in the arts** (48%, up from 34% in 2016)
- **the arts make for a richer and more meaningful life** (70%, up from 58% in 2016)
- **the arts should receive public funding** (64%, up from 50% in 2016).

There has also been a slight increase in the proportion of NSW residents who are feeling disconnected from the arts, with three in ten agreeing *that **the arts are not really for people like me*** (30%, up from 27% in 2016), which is a continuing national trend.

Investment in arts and creativity

As well as strong and growing support for public funding for the arts in Australia, Australians have clear priorities for investment. The top three priorities for those from NSW are:

- **ensuring children and young people have access to art and creative experiences to support learning and development** (73% ranked this in their top three priorities);
- **ensuring free or low-cost events are available** (66%) and
- **ensuring art and creative experiences are available to support people's health and wellbeing** (55%).

The high value that Australians place on the arts is reflected in the time and money they give to support artists, arts organisations and arts projects. In line with national trends, residents of NSW are **increasingly giving to the arts** (28%, up from 17% in 2016), including **donating money** (11%, up from 6%), **unpaid work such as helping artists or community groups with arts activities** (11%, up from 6%) and **volunteering** (10%, up from 6%).

Cultural identity and diversity

First Nations arts

More Australians now agree First Nations arts are an important part of Australia's culture and interest in First Nations arts is growing. Prior to COVID-19, Australians' appetite for both online and live engagement with the arts was increasing too.

Following national trends, more NSW residents now agree **First Nations arts are an important part of Australia's culture** (77%, up from 70% in 2016). However, just over half of those from NSW believe **First Nations arts are well represented** (53%, up from 49% in 2016), showing there is still work to be done to build the representation and profile of First Nations arts in Australia.

Both attendance and interest in First Nations arts were strong and growing prior to COVID-19. More than a third of NSW residents were **attending First Nations arts** (35%, up from 27% in 2016) and more than four in ten were **interested in First Nations arts** (43%). Among those interested, 48% reported a **growing interest**.

Cultural diversity

The arts are a key way that Australians connect with, and share, our cultural backgrounds, identities and heritages. All Australians are enriched and benefit from the tapestry of our people and cultural landscape.

Four in ten NSW residents **connect with, and share, their cultural background through arts and creativity** (40%), including by **attending arts events** (35%).

In line with national findings, more than half of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) NSW residents attend arts events focused on their cultural background or community (57%) and more than eight in ten attend arts events overall (85%), including significant **cross-cultural arts engagement** and strong **engagement with First Nations arts**.

Live attendance

Prior to COVID-19, live attendance at arts events was thriving. Attending arts experiences in person enables Australians to come together as audiences and connect with artists.

More than seven in ten NSW residents **attend the arts** (71%, up from 60% in 2016).

Almost half attend music (49%), two in five attend **theatre** (40%) and **visual arts and craft** (39%), 31% attend **dance** and nearly a quarter attend **literary events** (24%).

48% attend **festivals**, including music festivals (10%), visual art festivals or fairs (10%), multi-art form festivals (10%) and performing arts festivals (8%).

Creative participation

Australia is an increasingly creative nation. Nearly half of NSW residents now **create, produce or collaborate in the making of art** (47%, up from 31% in 2016).

- Over a third create using a **digital platform** (34%).
- Nearly a quarter of NSW residents create **visual arts and craft** (23%).
- Almost one in five create **music** (17%).
- 14% **produce creative writing**.
- Almost one in five creatively participate in **community arts** (19%).
- Almost one in ten creatively participate in **dance** (9%) and **theatre** (7%).

Listening to music recorded music, reading and digital engagement

Listening to recorded music

Recorded music is infused throughout the lives of almost every Australian, providing a soundtrack to our lives and helping us through the day. More than nine in ten NSW residents listen to **recorded music** (91%).

- 65% listen to **music on radio or tv**.
- Over half **stream music online for free** (e.g. YouTube) (54%).
- More than a third of NSW residents **listen to music they own** (either downloaded or a physical copy e.g. CDs/vinyl) (37%) and **stream music through a paid subscription** (e.g. Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music) (37%).

Reading

Despite busy lives and digital distractions, reading remains a fundamental activity for Australians and provides a lifetime of enjoyment.

In line with national trends, the proportion of NSW residents who **read for pleasure** (74%) has increased (up 19 percentage points from 2016). The most popular types of reading material are **novels or short stories** (48%), **instructional non-fiction** such as guidebooks or cookbooks (32%) and creative non-fiction such as biography or history (31%).

Print books remain the most popular format, read by more than seven in ten NSW residents (71%). 43% read **e-books** and a third listen to **audiobooks** (33%).

Australia is an increasingly
creative nation

Digital engagement

Most NSW residents **engage with the arts online** (82%, up from 76% in 2016). In the digital age, the arts are more accessible than ever. **Listening to streamed music** remains the most popular way to engage (66%).

Nearly two thirds of NSW residents **use digital platforms to engage with the arts** (64%), including **Facebook** (39%), **YouTube** (37%), and **Instagram** (25%).

A third of NSW residents **express themselves creatively on digital platforms** (34%), including through **image galleries** like Instagram (10%), **memes** (8%) and **music or songs** (8%). But from video games to creative blogs, those from NSW, like Australians overall, have differing views of which digital creations can be considered art.

Research approach

The 2019 National Arts Participation Survey was conducted from September to November 2019 with the survey sample of 8,928 Australians aged 15 years and over weighted to be nationally representative based on age, gender and location (by states and territories and metropolitan/regional Australia). The survey sample included 2,384 NSW residents.

Evolving with the times, the survey went online in 2019 after being conducted through a mix of telephone and online surveys in 2016. Due to this change, the results that are most comparable for showing trends over time are the results from the surveys conducted online in 2016. **Given the changes made to the National Arts Participation Survey, the previously published results in the *Connecting Australians* report are different to the 2016 data used for trend analysis in the *Creating Our Future* report.**