

Creating Our Future

Results of the National Arts Participation Survey



Ema Yuasa, Benjamin Hancock, Nobuyoshi Asai, Mui Cheuk-yin and Nalina Wait in Sue Healey's *ON VIEW: PANORAMA*, Yokohama 2020. Credit: Naoshi Hatori.

Dance factsheet

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, exploring Australians' engagement with and attitudes towards the arts and creative activity.

Building on the 2009, 2013 and 2016 editions, *Creating Our Future* 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.

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.

The full report includes detailed insights into different art forms, including dance.

Key findings about creating and participating in **dance** are included in this factsheet.

29%

of Australians attend
live dance events

2.4

live dance events attended
for every Australian in 2019

8%

of Australians create
or participate in dance

Introduction

Australian dance is well-regarded for its vitality, distinctive style and diversity. International tours by companies of all sizes such as The Australian Ballet, the Australian Dance Theatre, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Marrugeku, Lucy Guerin Inc and many others have established a key presence for Australian dancers and choreographers all over the world.

Australian dance has also captured domestic audiences. Findings in *Creating our Future* highlight the high levels of engagement that Australians have with dance. From contemporary to hip hop to classical, three in ten Australians attended dance in 2019. Compared to other art forms, those who attended dance events were the most frequent attendees with an average attendance rate of 16.3 dance events in 2019.

Australians are also increasingly participating in or creating various forms of dance, including contemporary, street dance or hip hop, social or competitive dance, ballet and classical, traditional or folk dance. Almost one in ten Australians participate in dance, including connecting with others through social dance.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the power of the arts and creative activities to connect and uplift us was clear. Many organisations offered online engagement during this time, including the Sydney Dance Company's Virtual Studio - creating community and hope through the anxiety and isolation caused by the pandemic.

Dance is an integral part of First Nations culture. Prior to COVID-19, First Nations respondents were almost three times more likely to attend and create dance than non-First Nations respondents.

Read on for more on Australians engagement with dance...

For the full report and online resources see:

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



GIF of Dance Performers: Courtney Scheu and Matt Cornell.

Attendance

Those who attend dance are the most frequent attenders out of all art forms

In 2019, 6 million Australians attended dance performances or festivals, or 29% of the population aged 15 years and over – up from 24% in 2016.¹

Those who attended dance attended 16.3 dance events in 2019 on average – the most frequent attendance of any art form. Across the Australian population, this equates to 2.4 live dance performances attended for every Australian aged 15 years and over.²

What types of dance do Australians attend?

- 7% of Australians attend **contemporary dance**.
- 6% of Australians attend **ballet**.
- 6% of Australians attend **street dance or hip hop**.
- 5% of Australians attend **social or competitive dance** (such as ballroom, swing or tango).
- 5% of Australians attend **classical, traditional or folk dance**.

Who attends dance performances and festivals?

- Dance attendance peaks **between the ages of 25–34 years** (42%).
- Two in three **First Nations respondents** attend dance (66%).
- Half of **CALD respondents** attend dance (48%).
- Two in five **parents with children aged under 16 years** attend dance (41%).
- Three in ten **major city residents** attend dance (30%).
- **Those with the highest household income** (more than \$200,000) have strong attendance (37%). Attendance at dance performances decreases steadily with household income to 34% for those with a household income of \$70,000–\$99,999 and to 23% for those with a household income under \$40,000.

1 For consistency with the 2019 methodology, 2016 figures are reported for the online sample only and may differ from those published in the previous National Arts Participation Survey report, Connecting Australians.

2 Frequency of attendance does not include attendance at festivals.

Colossus

Young Australians are highly engaged in the arts, with almost all recognising the positive impacts of the arts and creativity in our lives. *Colossus* is a recent project developed by one of Australia's most exciting choreographers, Stephanie Lake. First performed at the Melbourne Fringe Festival in September 2018 and then presented at the Melbourne International Arts Festival 2019 and Perth and Sydney Festivals in the summer of 2020, *Colossus* attracted audiences of over 120,000. Its video trailer has been viewed over 4.2 million times on Facebook. The work engages the local dance community, involving 50 young emerging dancers from each city or place it is performed. In 2021 *Colossus* will be performed in France, Germany and Spain. As the dancers move in and out of the group, the performance explores the dichotomy of the good and bad of humanity.

Colossus by Stephanie Lake Company, Arts Centre Melbourne, 2018.
Credit: Mark Gambino



Creative participation

Almost one in ten Australians participate in dance

In 2019, 1.6 million Australians created or participated in dance, or 8% of the population aged 15 years and over – up from 6% in 2016.

What types of dance do Australians participate in?

- 3% of Australians participate in **contemporary dance**.
- 3% of Australians participate in **street dance or hip hop**.
- 3% of Australians participate in **social or competitive dance**.
- 2% of Australians participate in **ballet**.
- 2% of Australians participate in **classical, traditional or folk dance**.

Who's creatively participating in dance?

- Creative participation in dance peaks **between the ages of 15–34 years** (14%).
- Nearly a quarter of **First Nations respondents** participate in dance (23%).
- One in six **CALD respondents** participate in dance (17%).
- More than one in ten **respondents with disability** participate in dance (13%).
- More than one in ten **parents of children aged under 16 years** participate in dance (12%).
- Creative participation in dance is strong among **those in the highest household income bracket of more than \$200,000** (13%) and decreases steadily with income to 10% of those with household income of \$100,000–\$139,999 and to 5% for those with a household income under \$40,000.

Sydney Dance Company Virtual Studio

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sydney Dance Company pivoted to offer online dance classes in their Virtual Studio. The largest public dance class program in Australia with over 80,000 dance class attendees each year in their Ultimo studios, the Virtual Studio focuses on accessibility and building a new national customer base. The virtual classes are available to everyone at all levels and have enabled participants to keep their bodies moving, their spirits up and their minds at ease through the isolation and anxiety of COVID-19. Dance styles include ballet, jazz, contemporary and hip hop, as well as Pilates and body conditioning. The classes, which are led by Company dancers from diverse backgrounds, are popular with people looking to learn something new and have fun and as well as those who dance regularly.

Sydney Dance Company's Virtual Studio, featuring Company dancer Jacopo Grabar, 2020. Credit: Pedro Greig.





Bangarra Dance Theatre Workshop, Perth Festival 2020. Credit: Cam Campbell.

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).

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.**