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## Social Factors in Cultural Participation

*Social Factors in Cultural Participation* is a series of four factsheets based on the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) 2019. The series builds on *Widening the Lens: Social inequality and arts participation* (2023) through detailed analyses of key topics using statistical techniques.

*Widening the Lens* considered the complex and intersecting nature of the social factors that inform our understandings of 'class'. These factsheets sit within the context of this understanding, while conducting a focused analysis of specific relationships that can be observed with the survey data.

The series is produced through a partnership between Creative Australia, RMIT University and the University of Canberra's News and Media Research Centre.

### Factsheet 1:

## Parental Occupational Class

### Headline findings

- Mothers' occupational class has a greater effect on the arts and cultural practices of the next generation than fathers' occupational class.
- People whose mothers were in professional occupations (eg, managers), at the time when the respondent was 15 years old, have the highest rates of reading for pleasure and cultural creation as adults.
- However, people whose mothers were in intermediate-skilled occupations (eg, technicians, clerical workers), at the time when the respondent was 15 years old, have the highest rates of cultural attendance as adults.
- People whose mothers were in low-skilled occupations have the lowest rates of participation across all three categories: attendance, creation and reading. These rates of participation are also lower than those among children of non-working mothers.
- These findings suggest a need to understand the extent to which school and other accessible activities for children can support all forms of creative engagement, in order to ensure opportunities for all children to take the benefits of creative engagement into adult life if they wish. They also raise the question of how we might improve opportunities for women in low-skilled occupations to engage with arts and culture for themselves if they wish.
- All occupation classes were based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) 1.3. See Appendix for details.
- Note that not all survey respondents answered the questions about father's or mother's occupational class, and no other options for parental arrangements were given in the survey design. Not everyone is raised by one mother and one father, and this analysis is thus limited in its exclusion of more varied caring arrangements.

## What role does parental occupational class play in the likelihood that Australians participate in arts and culture?

Researchers have long noted the important and distinct role played by maternal class background on arts and cultural practices.<sup>1</sup> The findings presented here support this research. We explore how both maternal and paternal occupational class background influence the likelihood of cultural attendance, creative participation, and reading for pleasure among Australian adults.

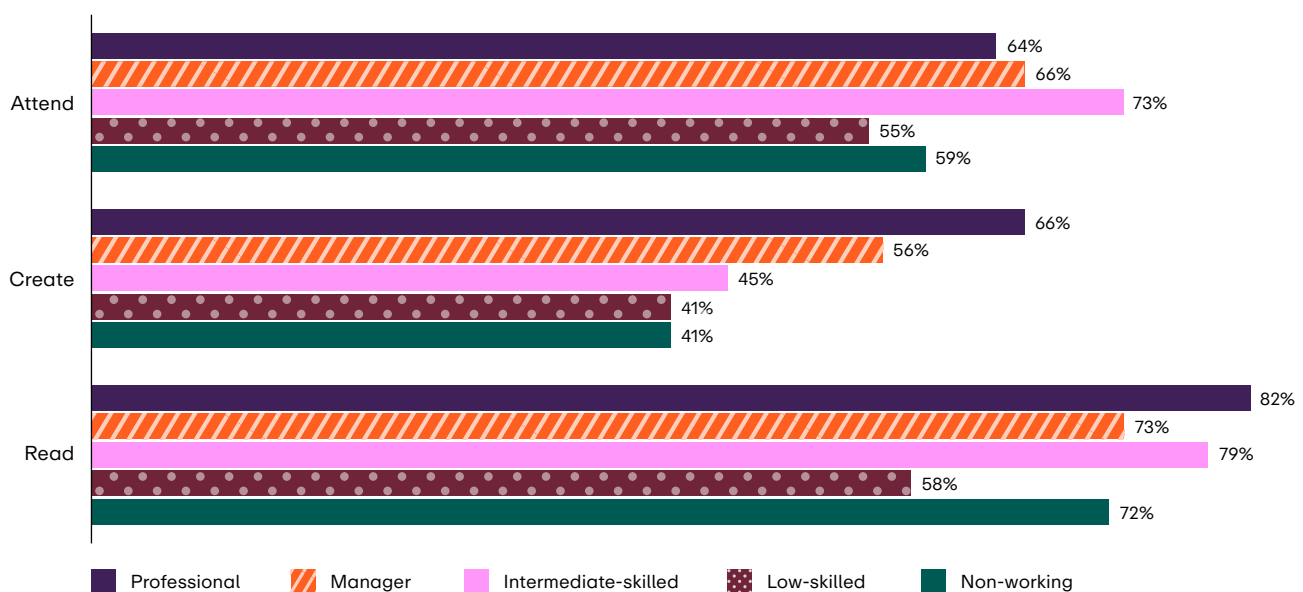
### Analysis 1: Differences in participation based on parental occupational class

To better understand how parental occupational class influences arts and cultural participation in Australia, we grouped respondents (age range 18-99) based on the reported occupation of their mother and father when respondents were 15 years old (see Appendix for details). Figures 1 and 2 shows the proportion of respondents from each parental occupational class group who engaged in cultural attendance, creative participation, and reading for pleasure. Consistent with the associations between education, class and participation reported in *Widening the Lens*, those with a professional father had the highest rates of engagement in each activity, while those with a father in a low-skilled occupation had the lowest rates of engagement. However, none of these results reached statistical significance, making it difficult to draw strong conclusions about the impact of fathers' occupational class.

In contrast, when looking at mothers' occupational class we found a stronger and slightly different pattern of results:

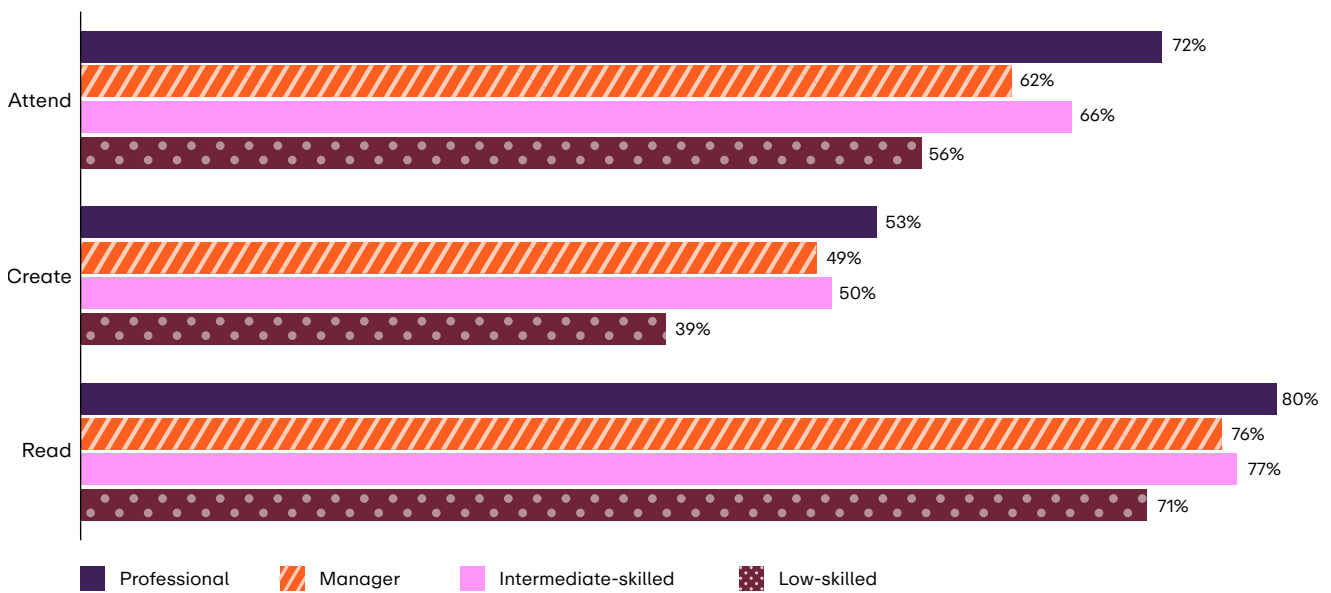
- Respondents with mothers in intermediate-skilled occupations, at the time when the respondent was 15 years old, were significantly more likely to attend cultural events (73%, compared to 65% of the overall sample).
- Respondents with professional mothers, at the time when the respondent was 15 years old, were significantly more likely to participate in cultural creation (66%, compared to 48% overall).
- Respondents with mothers in low-skilled occupations, at the time when the respondent was 15 years old, were significantly less likely to read for pleasure (58%, compared to 75% overall).

**Figure 1: Arts and cultural participation based on maternal occupational class (%)**



Note. Differences in *listening* activities were not analysed due to the very high rates of overall engagement (>93%). See Appendix for occupations that correspond with these skills.

<sup>1</sup> DiMaggio P and Mohr J 1999, 'The Intergenerational Transmission of Cultural Capital', *Research on Social Stratification and Mobility*, 14: 167-99.

**Figure 2: Arts and cultural participation based on paternal occupational class (%)**

### Summary of findings

This factsheet shows the unique role of mothers' occupational class on the future cultural participation of their adult children. These findings are in line with international research demonstrating the distinct special role of mothers in child-rearing in the United States,<sup>2</sup> in supporting children's education through engagement with schools in the United Kingdom,<sup>3</sup> and in organising extracurricular cultural activity in Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, we found that people whose mothers were professionals (at the time the respondent was 15 years old) were less likely to attend cultural events than those whose mothers were in intermediate-skilled occupations (at the time the respondent was 15 years old). This contrasts with the well-established positive link between education level and cultural attendance.<sup>5</sup>

These results point to some complex relationships between mother's occupation class and engagement with arts and culture as an adult, including:

- relative levels of time and other resources that were available to mothers in different occupation classes
- how mothers' work interacted with the types of engagement fostered in children, eg, music/art classes versus book culture versus going to events.

It is also possible that women's changing work patterns have impacted the relationship between mothers' occupation and cultural participation over time; however the cross-sectional nature of this dataset makes it difficult to disentangle such generational effects. The impacts of such social changes, and even legal interventions such as the *Sex Discrimination Act* (1984), on cultural participation is a potential area for future research.

2 Lareau A 2002, 'Invisible Inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families', *American Sociological Review*, 67:5, 747-776.  
 3 Reay D 2005, 'Doing the Dirty Work of Social Class? Mothers' Work in Support of their Children's Schooling', *The Sociological Review*, 53:2, 104-115.  
 4 Shih Y-P and Yi C-C 2014, 'Cultivating the difference: Social class, parental values, cultural capital and children's after-school activities in Taiwan', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 45:1, 55-75.  
 5 Australia Council for the Arts 2023, *Widening The Lens: Social inequality and arts participation*.

## Analysis 2: Key predictors of arts and cultural participation

Figures 3 and 4 show the results of the regression analyses, which estimates the effect of a range of factors on cultural participation. These findings provide further support for the important role of mothers in shaping arts and cultural participation:

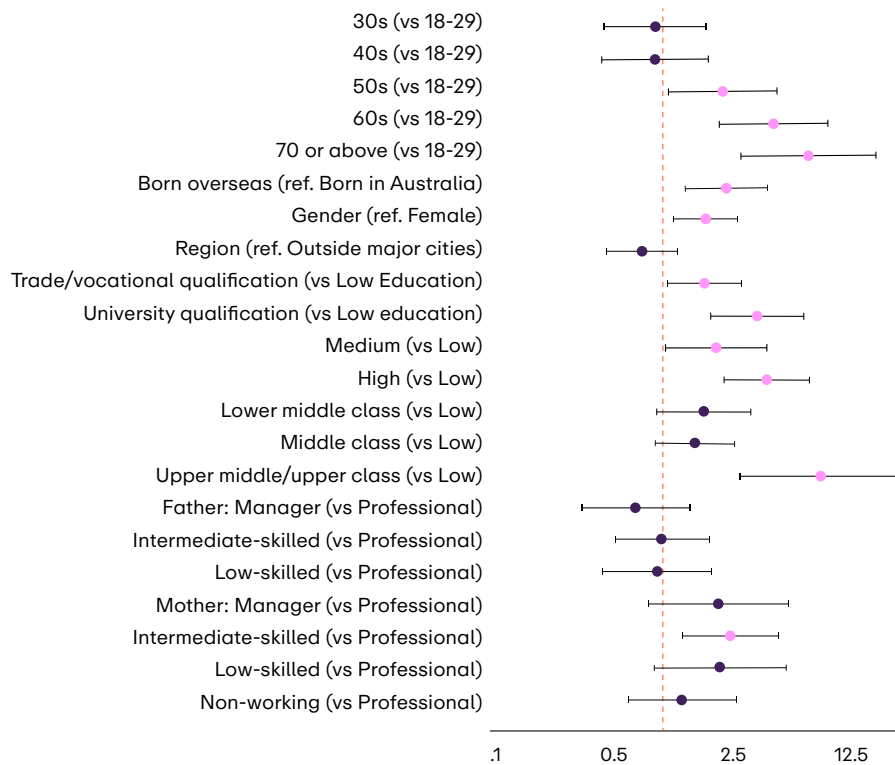
- **Mothers' occupational class**, but not fathers' occupational class, was found to be statistically significant in determining the probability of cultural **attendance** and **reading** for pleasure in adulthood.
- Respondents with mothers who worked in **intermediate-skilled** occupations were **2.5 times** more likely to **attend** arts and cultural events as adults, compared to respondents with professional mothers.
- Respondents with mothers who worked in **low-skilled** occupations had a **0.3 times lower** probability of engaging in **reading** activities as adults, compared to respondents with professional mothers.
- Respondents with **non-working** mothers had a **0.4 times lower** probability of **reading** for pleasure in adulthood, compared to respondents with professional mothers.

## What other factors influence attending and reading for pleasure?

As shown in **Figures 3 and 4**, the strongest predictors of **attendance** were **age** (increasing probability from 50 years, with those aged over 70 years the most likely to attend), and **self-identified** class (identifying as 'upper middle' or 'upper' class). Being **female**, having an undergraduate **degree** (or higher) and having a **high income** were also statistically significant predictors. Interestingly, being **born in Australia** was also associated with a greater likelihood of cultural attendance.

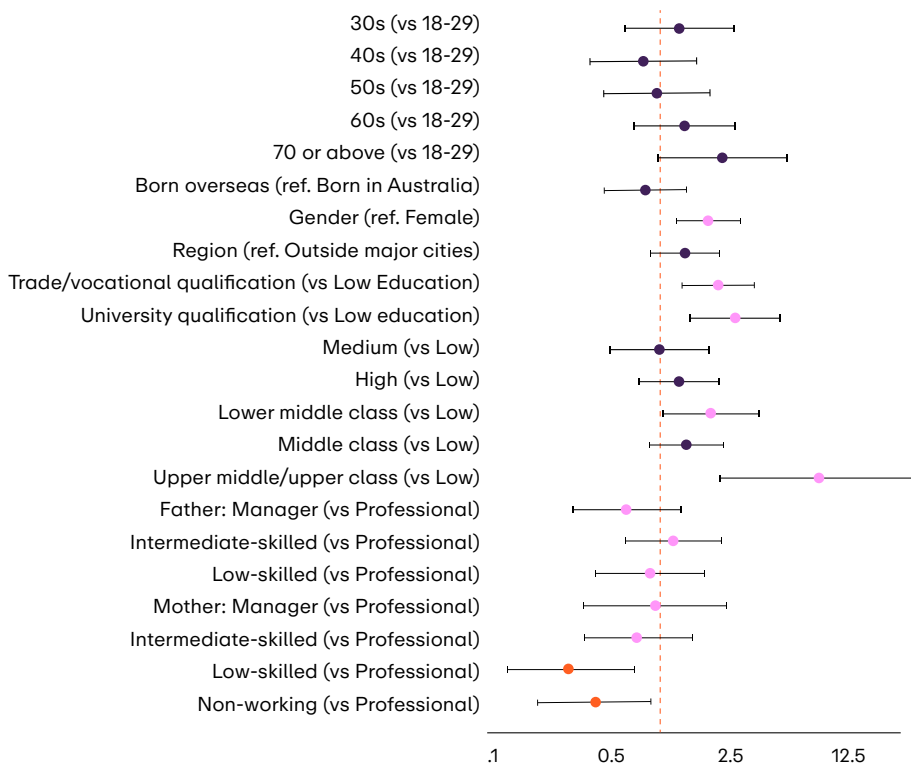
The key factors associated with a greater likelihood of **reading** for pleasure were being **female**, having a **post-school qualification**, and identifying as **upper middle/upper class**.

**Figure 3: Binary logistic regression results for Attend**



Note. Odds ratio and confidence interval for each factor, with significant variables indicated in colour (p < 0.05). If the confidence interval includes or crosses 1 (the dotted vertical line), the variable is not significant. Variables in pink represent a positive likelihood. All variables are categorical.

**Figure 4: Binary logistic regression results for Read for Pleasure**



Note. Odds ratio and confidence interval for each factor, with significant variables indicated in colour (p < 0.05). If the confidence interval includes or crosses 1 (the dotted vertical line), the variable is not significant. Variables in pink represent a positive likelihood and variables in orange represent a negative likelihood. All variables are categorical.

## Appendix

Parents' occupational categories are based on the self-reported occupation of each parent when the respondent was 15 years old (this age was determined by Australian Consortium for Social and Political Research Incorporated's (ACSPRI) in their AuSSA survey design). The four occupational categories used in this report are based on ANZSCO 1.3 as per the table below:

	<b>Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) 1.3 (2013)</b>	<b>Main Skill Levels</b>	<b>Example occupations</b>
Managers	Major Group 1 'Managers'	1, 2	Business owner
Professionals	Major Group 2 'Professionals'	1	Accountant, engineer, nurse, teacher
Intermediate-skilled	Major Groups 3, 4, 5 and 6 'Technicians and Trades Workers', 'Community and Personal Service Workers', 'Clerical and Administrative Workers', 'Sales Workers'	2-5	Electrician, butcher, carpenter, bookkeeper, hairdresser, retail worker
Low-skilled	Major Groups 7 and 8. 'Machinery Operators and Drivers', 'Labourers'	3-5	Labourer, farm/factory worker, cleaner

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### About the factsheets

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) is an annual national survey, which generates Australia's main source of data for the study of the social attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of Australians. In 2019, the topic for AuSSA was social inequality. The survey asked a range of questions designed to explore respondents' views on the overall fairness of society and their place within it. Creative Australia (then called the Australia Council for the Arts) added four questions to the 2019 AuSSA, aligned with those from the National Arts Participation Survey. Based on this dataset, Creative Australia published *Widening the Lens: Social inequality and arts participation* report in July 2023. To explore further insights from ACSPRI's 2019 AuSSA on how income, education and occupation impact cultural participation, researchers from the University of Canberra and RMIT University are collaborating to produce a series of fact sheets in 2023–24. This is the first of the series. For details on the methodology and other findings, please refer to the *main* report.

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**Table: Binary logistic regression (odds ratios) (for reference)**

	Independent variable	Dependent variable	
		Attend	Read
Age	18-29 (0) (ref)		
	30s	0.92	1.326
	40s	0.92	0.786
	50s	2.224*	0.945
	60s	4.388***	1.432
	70 or above	7.034***	2.507
	Born overseas (ref. Born in Australia (1))	2.369**	0.796
Gender (ref. Female (1))		1.788**	2.024**
	Region (ref. Outside major cities (1))	0.763	1.455
Education	Low education (0) (ref)		
	Trade/vocational qualification	1.753*	2.329**
	University qualification	3.523***	3.067**
Income	Low (0) (ref)		
	Medium	2.047*	0.981
	High	4.006***	1.32
Class	Low (0) (ref)		
	Lower middle class	1.748	2.109*
	Middle class	1.541	1.465
	Upper middle/upper class	8.242***	10.536**
Father	Professional (0) (ref)		
	Manager	0.702	0.614
	Intermediate-skilled	0.993	1.218
	Low-skilled	0.946	0.864
Mother	Professional (0) (ref)		
	Manager	2.128	0.926
	Intermediate-skilled	2.492**	0.719
	Low-skilled	2.178	0.267**
	Non-working	1.312	0.381*

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\* &lt; 0.01, \*\*\* &lt; 0.001