



Australian Government

**Creative
Australia**

Creating Value

Results of the National Arts Participation Survey

Dance factsheet

Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey is the first survey of its kind to be released by Creative Australia and the fifth survey in the landmark research series from the Australia Council, following iterations in 2009, 2013, 2016 and 2019.

The research series provides a comprehensive overview of Australians' evolving relationships with arts, culture and creativity. By examining our engagement with creativity – both through the lens of self-expression and engagement with arts and creative activities – this series builds the evidence base on participation in the arts in Australia.

The full report includes detailed insights on engagement with specific art forms, including dance.

Key findings about **engagement with dance** are included in this factsheet.

In 2022:

28%

of Australians attend live dance events or festivals

9%

of Australians create or participate in dance

Australians

who attend live dance events attend 13 dance events per year

Introduction

Dance is an important component of our nation's cultural heritage. Australia is home to many professional and amateur dance companies, representing diverse styles including ballet, contemporary, physical and musical theatre, hip-hop, and First Nations dance.

Those who attend dance performances attend at higher rates than other arts goers. On average, Australians who attend dance performances attend 13 dance events per year. However, this is a decline from 16.3 in 2019 and Australians are attending less frequently. Fewer Australians are attending dance performances on a weekly basis, and more are attending every couple of months.

Australians are participating in or creating various forms of dance consistent with rates seen before the COVID-19 pandemic, 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 (9%). Research shows that participating in dance of any kind has a positive impact on wellbeing. Regardless of age, gender or fitness, taking part in dance classes or dancing socially improves our health and wellbeing.¹

Dance is also an integral part of First Nations culture. Over half of First Nations respondents attended dance festivals or events in 2022 (56% compared to 28% of Australians overall) and nearly one in four First Nations respondents participated in dance (25% compared to 8% of non-First Nations respondents). First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) respondents are highly engaged in dance, however a high proportion report feeling that **cultural and creative experiences are not really for them**. These seemingly contradictory results, also seen in previous iterations of the survey for some groups, suggest an ongoing disconnect between active participation and engagement, and perceptions of the arts.

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

For the full report and online resources see: <https://creative.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/creating-value/>

Live attendance

6 million Australians attend live dance events

In 2022, 5.8 million Australians, or 28% of the population aged 15 years and over, attended live dance performances or festivals. This is consistent with 29% in 2019.

Dance attendees are the most frequent live arts attendees

Australians who attend dance performances attend at higher rates than other arts goers. On average Australians who attend dance performances attend 13 dance events per year, which is 0.7 more events than the number of literary events that literature attendees go to (12.3 per year), 4.3 events more than music goers (8.7 per year), 4.7 more than visual arts attendees (8.3 per year) and 5.7 events more than theatre attendees (7.3 per year).

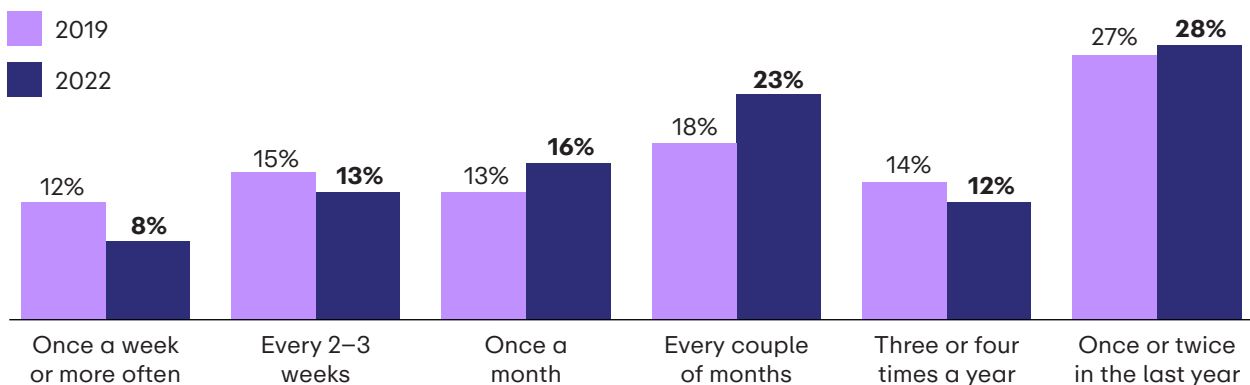
¹ See Chappell K et al 2021, 'The Aesthetic, Artistic and Creative Contributions of Dance for Health and Wellbeing Across the Lifecourse: A systematic review', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 16:1.

Australians are attending dance performances less often

However, overall, there has been a decline in the number of dance events attended each year, from 16.3 dance events on average in 2019 to 13 in 2022.

While the number of Australians who attended dance performances remained consistent with 2019, Australians are attending less frequently. Fewer Australians are attending dance performances on a weekly basis, and more are attending every couple of months. Weekly attendance at dance events in 2022 dropped by four percentage points (8% compared to 12% in 2019), and attendance every couple of months has increased by five percentage points (23% compared to 18% in 2019).

Figure 1: Australians' live dance event attendance frequency, 2019 and 2022



Q2_3. And in the past 12 months, how often did you personally attend these kinds of events (eg exhibitions, performances, shows)? – Dance Base: Those who attended live dance events (2022: n=1,252 // 2019: n=1,262)

What types of dance events do Australians attend?

- 6% of Australians attend **contemporary dance** (consistent with 7% in 2019).
- 5% of Australians attend **street dance or hip-hop** (down from 6% in 2019).
- 5% of Australians attend **ballet** (down from 6% in 2019).
- 4% of Australians attend **social or competitive dance** (such as ballroom, swing or tango) (consistent with 5% in 2019).
- 3% of Australians attend **classical, traditional or folk dance** (down from 5% in 2019).

Who attends dance performances and festivals?

- More than half of **First Nations respondents** attend dance events and festivals (56% down from 66% in 2019, compared to 28% of Australians overall). Almost a quarter (23%) of First Nations respondents attended at least one form of dance event – not including festivals – over the past 12 months, twice as many as non-First Nations respondents (12%). The most popular forms of dance for First Nations respondents to attend are **contemporary dance** (11% compared to 6% of non-First Nations respondents) and **classical/traditional/folk dance** (10% compared to 3% of non-First Nations respondents).
- Two in five **CALD respondents** attend dance events and festivals (43% compared to 28% of Australians overall). One in five CALD respondents attended a live dance event – not including festivals – over the past 12 months (19% compared to 11% of non-CALD respondents).
- While First Nations and CALD respondents are highly engaged in dance, a high proportion report feeling that **cultural and creative experiences are not really for them**. Two in five First Nations respondents and one in three CALD respondents report that **cultural and creative experiences are not really for people like me** (39% of First Nations respondents compared to 27% of non-First Nations respondents; and 31% of CALD respondents compared to 27% of non-CALD respondents).
- These seemingly contradictory results, also seen in previous iterations of the survey for some groups, suggest an ongoing disconnection between active participation and engagement, and perceptions of the arts as expensive, hard to access and narrowly defined. They also resonate with observations of the under-representation of non-dominant cultures and groups in audiences for certain forms of publicly funded arts and culture, adding important context to the body of research that seeks to understand who has access to arts and culture and why.²

2 Deakin University 2023, Changing Organisations to Diversity Arts Audiences: Summary of findings from national survey.

Case study

CONSIDERABLE SEXUAL LICENCE

At the world premiere of *CONSIDERABLE SEXUAL LICENCE* at Yirramboi Festival 2021 in Melbourne, Joel Bray Dance invited audiences to consider the impact of colonisation on sexuality, queerness and consent in Australia.

The First Nations experimental arts piece, *CONSIDERABLE SEXUAL LICENCE*, enabled audiences to experience a fierce, innovative and radical contribution to contemporary First Nations culture. While celebrating Country, community, consent and kinship, *CONSIDERABLE SEXUAL LICENCE* explored histories and relationships to sex, sexuality and personal freedom.

CONSIDERABLE SEXUAL LICENCE,
Yirramboi Festival 2021.
Credit: Bryony Jackson.



Creative participation

1.8 million Australians participate in dance

In 2022, 1.8 million Australians, or 9% of the population aged 15 years or over, created dance. This includes those who created dance to engage with their own cultural background, language group or community, and is slightly down from 10% in 2019.

5% of Australians created dance to engage with their cultural background in 2022. This is slightly down from 6% in 2019.

Excluding those who created dance to engage with their own cultural background, language group or community, 1.3 million Australians, or 6% of the population aged 15 years or over, created or participated in dance. This has decreased slightly from 8% in 2019 and has returned to levels seen in 2016 (6%).

Who creatively participates in dance?

Of the 9% of the population aged 15 years or over who created dance, including to engage with their own cultural background, language group or community:

- One in four **First Nations respondents** participate in dance (25% compared to 8% of non-First Nations respondents).
- 17% of **CALD respondents** participate in dance (compared to 6% of non-CALD respondents).
- More than one in ten **respondents with disability** participate in dance (12% compared to 8% of those without disability).
- **Young Australians** are more likely than older Australians to participate in dance (17% of those aged 15–24 compared to 12% of those aged 25–49 and 2% of Australians aged 50 and over).

What types of dance do Australians participate in?

In 2022, 6% of the population aged 15 years or over created dance, excluding to engage with their own cultural background, language group or community. Of these:

- 3% of Australians participate in **contemporary dance** (consistent with 3% in 2019).
- 3% of Australians participate in **street dance or hip hop** (consistent with 3% in 2019).
- 2% of Australians participate in **social or competitive dance** such as ballroom, swing or tango (consistent with 3% in 2019).
- 2% of Australians participate in **classical, traditional or folk dance** (consistent with 2% in 2019).
- 1% of Australians participate in **ballet** (a slight decrease from 2% in 2019).



What do we know about how dance classes positively impact wellbeing?

Increasingly, research finds that participating in dance of any kind has a positive impact on our wellbeing.³ Regardless of age, gender or fitness, taking part in dance classes or dancing socially improves our health and wellbeing across our life span. Dance classes and dancing socially at any age improves our sense of self, confidence and creativity.

Research has examined the varied benefits of specific dance programs. The Dance 4 Your Life study investigated a dance program for young people aged 14 based in the United Kingdom.⁴ It revealed that just one class a week for three months increased students' fitness level and self-esteem due to physical exercise, a stimulating learning environment, positive engagement with peers, and creativity.

Another study, titled Dance for Health, focused on a community-based program for adults in hospital. It found that weekly dance sessions led to positive feelings, enriched social engagement and reduced stress related to being in hospital.⁵

Research approach

The 2022 National Arts Participation Survey was conducted in September – October 2022 and the results are based on a nationally representative sample of 9,396 people. The previous National Arts Participation Survey was conducted in 2019, prior to the disruptions of COVID-19 and provided a benchmark of Australians' arts engagement before the pandemic. The 2022 survey results, in comparison, provide an update on arts engagement in the wake of COVID-19.

The 2022 survey results provide critical insights into how Australians' arts engagement might be changing following the disruptions felt by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to the role of the arts for our individual and collective wellbeing. The 2022 survey closely examined Australians' relationship with the arts throughout lockdown periods, providing insights into the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing. It asked participants to reflect on their digital arts engagement throughout this time and to share their own perceptions of how their engagement might have changed.

3 See Chappell K et al 2021, 'The Aesthetic, Artistic and Creative Contributions of Dance for Health and Wellbeing Across the Lifecourse: A systematic review', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 16:1.

4 Connolly MK, Quin E and Redding E 2011, 'Dance 4 your life: Exploring the health and well-being implications of a contemporary dance intervention for female adolescents', *Research in Dance Education*, 12.

5 Bungay et al 2022, 'Dance for Health: the impact of creative dance sessions on older people in an acute hospital setting', *Arts & Health An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice* Volume 14:1.