

MEDIA RELEASE

Connecting Australians: The National Arts Participation Survey

The Australia Council for the Arts has today released the findings from the third National Arts Participation Survey. The findings confirm the significant and increasing personal value Australians place on the impact of the arts, and the ways in which they make our communities stronger and more cohesive.

Chief Executive Tony Grybowski said that this research shows more clearly than ever what an essential role the arts play in daily life, and in building social cohesion which promotes a healthy and inclusive public life for all Australians.

“The research demonstrates that the arts have a unique capacity to connect Australians from diverse backgrounds, and that two in three of us believe the arts help us to understand other people and cultures, and allow us to connect to others. We are highly connected digitally and yet we live in a global era of growing social, cultural and political division that is being evidenced through major social threats. These findings confirm that Australians firmly believe the arts contribute to addressing these issues through breaking down barriers, promoting inclusion and creating understanding.” Mr Grybowski said.

“It is also overwhelmingly apparent from the data that while 98% of Australians engage in the arts, they do so more frequently and with much greater breadth than they realise. We need to demystify what we mean by ‘the arts’. Many Australians have a narrow view of what the arts include, often dismissing the things we enjoy most frequently, such as listening to music, reading or going to a festival. As a result, they are underestimating the vital role the arts play in the quality of their everyday experience. Gaining this clarity is important so that when talking about the value of supporting the arts we all understand what is at stake.

“As the third survey in the series, the research identifies important trends. Engagement with First Nations arts has doubled since 2009, reaching 7 million Australians last year. Creating, accessing and sharing the arts online is booming - new and additional arts experiences are expanding on rather than replacing live attendance which remains strong.

“The report also reveals the importance of the arts in the lives of younger Australians. They create and experience the arts at the highest rates, especially online; they love festivals and over half engage with the arts as part of their cultural background. This gives the arts a unique role in shaping the future of our national culture.

“The research is responsive to changes in the way we create and experience art. For the first time in 2016 the survey collected data on Australians’ engagement with the arts as part of their cultural background, community arts and cultural development, and festival attendance. This highlighted the importance and accessibility of festivals, with 9 million Australians attending an arts festival in 2016. Community Arts and Cultural Development is acknowledged as a highly innovative area which crosses art forms, connects artists and audiences, and delivers both high quality art and transformative social outcomes.

“The 2016 National Arts Participation Survey builds on decades of work by the Australia Council to demonstrate the essential value of the arts to individual and public life, and we consider this central to our mission. The evidence demonstrates the impact of the arts across nearly every facet of society, making it a valuable resource to inform policy, programs and investment well beyond the arts sector.

Key Research Findings:

- 98% of Australians engage with the arts and since the 2013 survey there is substantially increased recognition of their positive impact on our wellbeing and ability to develop new ideas.
- More Australians now believe the arts reflect Australia's cultural diversity and that they shape and express Australian identity.
- 3 in 4 Australians believe the arts are an important way to get a different perspective on a topic or issue.
- 7 million Australians experienced First Nations arts last year, double the number since the first survey in 2009. 4 in 5 believe they are an important part of Australia's culture.
- Three quarters of us think the arts are an important part of the education of every Australian and are proud when Australian artists do well overseas.
- Younger Australians (15-24 years) create and experience the arts at the highest rates, especially online; they are big festival and First Nations arts attenders; and over half engage with the arts as part of their cultural background.
- Online and live arts experiences both remain important to Australians, creating greater access and new experiences rather than one replacing the other.
- 8 in 10 people engage with the arts online, increasing from 7 in 10 in 2013, and 5 in 10 in 2009 - with music streaming the largest contributor to this growth. Online activity is creating new opportunities to collaborate and share, and connecting artists and audiences directly.
- 9 million Australians attended an arts festival in 2016. Arts festivals are diverse and accessible, bringing local communities together in immersive experiences and encouraging regional and international tourism.
- This survey saw a substantial increase in the number of Australians attending theatre or dance from 2013 (42% to 53%), as well as increases for visual arts and craft, and new data which shows 1 in 5 Australians attend literary events such as book clubs, talks and festivals.
- The downward trend in the proportion of Australians who donate money generally is not reflected in arts giving. 1 in 4 Australians give time or money to the arts reflecting their value in our lives.

For more information and to explore interactive dashboards visit the [Australia Council website](#).

The Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's principal arts funding and advisory body. The Australia Council is committed to making the vitality of our arts and culture more visible, and to recognising and supporting the evolving way that Australians make and experience art.

Media contact:

Kate Clark, Director of Communications, Australia Council for the Arts
Tel: (02) 9215 9166 Email: k.clark@australiacouncil.gov.au