



The Nancy Hanks Center  
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20506-0001  
(202) 682-5400  
[www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov)

**Embargoed for release until 12:01 am, December 10, 2009**

**Media contact: Sally Gifford  
(202) 682-5606**

**SENIOR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN JOAN SHIGEKAWA CONVENES  
ARTS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AND NEA DISCIPLINE DIRECTORS TO DISCUSS THE  
NEA'S 2008 SURVEY OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS**

*Convening is an opportunity to discuss the future of arts participation*

Washington, DC — **Senior Deputy Chairman Joan Shigekawa** convened a roundtable discussion with national arts service organizations, regional arts organizations, and NEA staff to discuss the NEA's **2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts**, the nation's largest and most representative study of adults' arts participation habits.

Representatives from 40 service organizations participated in the convening, including the **Association of Art Museum Directors**, **Dance/USA**, the **Future of Music Coalition**, the **National Association of Latino Art and Culture**, the **National Center for Creativity in Aging**, the **National Network for Folk Arts in Education**, and the **New England Foundation for the Arts**.

The convening began with a greeting from **NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman**, followed by a summary presentation of the survey's findings from **Sunil Iyengar, NEA Director of Research**. Representatives from three service organizations offered formal responses – Helen De Michiel from the **National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture**, Carlton Turner from **Alternate ROOTS**, and Jesse Rosen from **The League of American Orchestras** – following which Ms. Shigekawa led a frank and freewheeling conversation about how these findings should inform the arts community's work going forward, as well as how the survey should be expanded and refined in the future.

The survey was conducted in partnership with the United States Census Bureau and asked more than 18,000 people 18 years of age and older about their frequency of arts engagement. It has been conducted five times since 1982.

"It is important that the National Endowment for the Arts have regular conversation with the arts community about how the public participates in the arts, and what we can do to connect more Americans with more art, more often," said NEA Senior Deputy Chairman Joan Shigekawa. "Our research shows a strong connection between arts participation and civic participation, but art only works when the public participates. Today was a chance for the NEA staff to hear and learn from the service organizations that work with our country's arts organizations, and we look forward to many more such opportunities."

"This is an important and unique opportunity to engage in conversation with colleagues and peers on issues that will shape the direction of our work and the work of the NEA," said Carlton Turner, Director of Alternate ROOTS. "Having time to strategize on how our organizations can support more participation in the arts is undervalued, and it is important that the NEA take the lead in making these engagements possible."

"This is the right conversation to be having at this moment," said League of American Orchestras President and CEO Jesse Rosen. "We are grateful to the NEA for undertaking the research that is prompting this dialogue. Our own research confirms that something big is changing in the way Americans participate in all types of

activities. That is why orchestras across the country are embracing innovative strategies for bringing classical music to a broader cross-section of the American public.”

“When I think about creativity, I think about connectivity: the emerging digital landscape offers so many new pathways to explore media as a powerful way to connect people and cultural institutions,” said Helen De Michiel, Co-Director of the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture. “These new tools demand collaboration to inspire new and younger Americans to participate in the arts, which is why I was thrilled to be in conversation with my colleagues across the disciplines today. Never before in our culture has there been a moment when the arts can be democratically offered across generations and geographies using all the technologies now available in people’s homes and hands.”

Among the findings that were discussed:

### **Audiences for ballet, classical music, jazz, and theatre are both declining and growing older**

- Nearly 35 percent of U.S. adults – or an estimated 78 million – attended an arts performance in the 2008 survey period, compared with about 40 percent in 1982, 1992, and 2002. <sup>i</sup> <sup>ii</sup>

Performing arts attendees are increasingly older (between 46 and 49 years old) than the average U.S. adult (45 years old). Forty-five to 54-year-olds – historically dependable arts participants – declined for all art forms except musical theatre.

- People with higher levels of education – usually the most likely to attend or participate in the arts – have curtailed their participation in nearly all art forms since 1982. High school graduates had the steepest rate of decline – 25 percent – between 2002 and 2008.

### **Americans are increasingly participating in the arts through new media**

- The Internet and broadcast media are popular ways to engage with the arts. Forty seven million adults downloaded, watched, or listened to music, theater or dance performances online – and most said they did so at least once a week. More Americans view or listen to broadcasts and recordings of arts events than attend them live (live theater being the sole exception).
- Photography/videography/film-making increased in popularity as art-making activities, from 12 percent to 15 percent, since 1992, supplanting weaving/sewing as the most popular creative activity reported.

### **Generation Y reports taking fewer arts classes/lessons**

- When people ages 18-24 were asked if they had taken an art class/lesson at some point in their lives, they reported lower rates of participation than previous generations for all art forms compared in this study (by 6-23 percentage points, depending on the art form, from 1982 to 2008).

### **Different demographic groups described different cultural preferences**

- African Americans are almost twice as likely to sing in a choir or other vocal group as adults in general.
- Almost 11 million adults attended a live Latin, Spanish, or salsa music performance in the previous 12 months. Audiences for these performances were younger and less affluent than audiences for

other art forms. The 2008 survey was the NEA's first attempt to measure attendance at Latin/Spanish/salsa concerts.

### **Arts participation correlates with higher civic participation**

- People who participate in the arts are 2 to 3 times as likely to engage in positive civic and individual activities – such as volunteering, attending sporting events, and participating in outdoor activities – than non-arts participants.
- Participation in most leisure activities (except volunteering and charity work) among all adults declined from 2002 to 2008. The average time spent watching television (about three hours daily) has not changed significantly since 1982.

### **Regional differences in arts participation**

- New England and Pacific region residents had some of the highest rates of attendance (42 percent of adults in each region) for the arts activities traditionally measured in the survey.
- In personal performance or creation of art, the Plains states of Kansas and Nebraska have some of the highest participation rates nationwide. Twenty percent of adults in Kansas said they played a musical instrument. In Nebraska, that rate was nearly 18 percent. Nationwide, 13 percent—or 29 million Americans—reported playing a musical instrument.
- A related research note on arts participation measured in regions and states is also being released today.

The NEA will release additional topic-specific reports on the roles of age, race and ethnicity, arts learning, media use, and arts creation and performance.

The survey, geographic research note, questionnaire, raw data and user's guide are available on the NEA website: [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

The NEA is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest national annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

For more than 30 years, the NEA Office of Research & Analysis has produced reliable and nationally representative research on significant topics affecting artists and arts organizations. The NEA is the only federal agency to conduct long-term and detailed analyses of arts participation.

For more information, please visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

###

---

<sup>i</sup> For the purpose of consistency, this comparison of 2008 to previous years excludes Latin/Spanish/Salsa concert attendance rates.

<sup>ii</sup> Results from 1985 survey were largely similar to those in 1982 and have been excluded from the report.