

Culture and leisure

People can benefit in many ways from participation in cultural and leisure activities. Participation in these activities can enhance community cohesion and strength. Cultural activities are seen as a valuable forum for social examination and debate, and a means of fostering the creativity, innovation, and dialogue necessary for economic development. And many leisure activities bring health benefits by providing relaxation and physical activity.

The concept of culture and leisure allows us to acknowledge some inherent aspects of human nature, such as our need for identity, our creativity, history, attunement to aesthetic meaning, spirituality and our propensity for play and enjoyment. Given the wide variety of factors these concepts cover, there are difficulties in selecting an appropriate indicator that can be used to assess progress in this area. One measure of progress might focus on our freedom to express our cultural identity, who we are and to celebrate our cultural differences. Another might measure our ability and willingness to interact with other cultures, or to participate in the arts, sports and recreational activities.

While we recognise the importance of reporting on all these aspects of progress in culture and leisure, at present we only include a number of supplementary indicators relating to participation in arts, sports and leisure activities. Future editions of MAP will provide further exploration of cultural indicators. Measures of our attendance and participation in cultural and leisure activities can provide an indication of our capacity to undertake these activities, and the level of importance we place on their contributions to our wellbeing.

Attendance rates are a way of quantifying the extent of involvement in culture and leisure activities. Attendance at cultural venues and events and at sporting events was slightly higher in 2002 than in 1995. During 2002, about 88% of the Australian population aged 18 and over attended at least one cultural venue or event. In 1995 this

What is culture and leisure?

Culture and leisure have much in common. Many activities are both cultural activities and leisure activities (e.g. visiting a museum). Often what separates a cultural activity from a leisure activity is simply the context in which it takes place. Culture and leisure also support and feed off one another. Subcultures often develop around leisure activities, and leisure activities such as socialising are central to broader cultural exchange and interaction.¹

Culture

Culture is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group. It encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, values systems, traditions and beliefs.² In this edition of MAP we focus on culture as expressed through participation in the arts, sports and recreational activities.

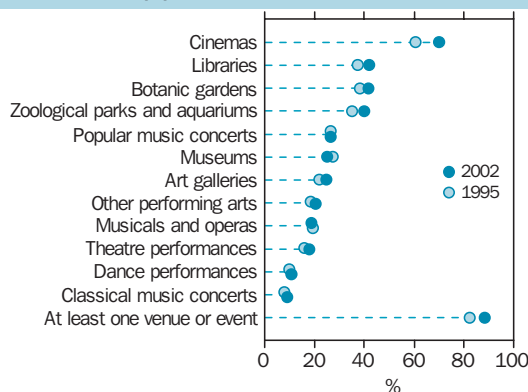
Leisure

Leisure are those activities undertaken by a person for enjoyment, recuperation, or relaxation and includes hobbies, recreation and cultural and artistic pursuits.³ Leisure time gives people an opportunity to recover from pressures of work and other commitments, to bond with family and community members, to pursue their interests and to reflect on their life direction and meaning.¹

figure was 82%. Cinemas were reported as the cultural venue with the highest attendance rates in both years (70% of people in 2002 and 60% in 1995). About 40% of those who visited libraries in 2002 went over 10 times during the year, however the majority of people who visited museums, or attended musicals and operas went only once during the 12 month period.⁴

There were 7 million persons aged 18 and over (42% of the adult population) who attended at least one sporting event during 2002. Attendance at sporting events has risen over the period 1995 to 2002, with 5.6 million people attending a sports event (excluding motor sports) in 1995 and 6.5 million attending in 2002. Over this period, there was a large increase in the number of persons attending Australian Rules football (from 1.7

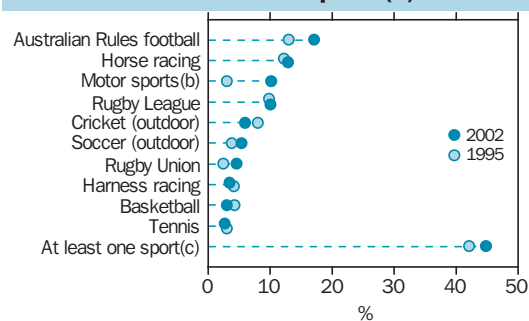
Attendance at selected cultural venues and events(a)



(a) Data relate to persons aged 18 years and over.

Source: ABS Attendance at selected cultural venues and events 2002 cat. no. 4114.0

Attendance at selected sports(a)



(a) Data relate to persons aged 18 years and over.

(b) The increase in motor sport attendance needs to be interpreted with caution because a specific question on motor sports attendance was asked in 1999 and 2002.

(c) Does not include motor sports.

Source: Sports Attendance, Australia 2002 cat. no. 4174.0

Leisure and free time

The ABS Time Use Survey divides the activities on which people spend their time into four main categories: necessary time, contracted time, committed time, and free time. 'Free time' is the amount of time left over when the previous three types of time have been taken out. Although 'free time' may be a positive for many people, by providing opportunity for involvement in culture and leisure activities, others may find free time less positive. For example, some unemployed or retired persons may feel they have too much free time, or may be unable to participate in leisure activities for a range of reasons (health or economic reasons), resulting in social isolation. Also, free time can be used for leisure activities with negative social implications, such as gambling or drug use.

Between 1992 and 1997 there was no overall change in the amount of 'free time' reported by Australians, with free time taking up about 22% of the day. Most free time (86%) was spent on a range of recreation and leisure activities such as watching TV, listening to the radio, taking part in sport and outdoor activities, reading and talking. As free time activities are often combined (reading and listening to music) or done at the same time as activities in other time categories (e.g. housework and listening to the radio), the following information applies to the time spent on all activities (e.g. main activities and simultaneous activities). Combining the main and simultaneous activities shows that 551 minutes a day were spent on free time activities, with men and women spending an almost identical amount of time.⁵ In 1997, visiting entertainment and cultural venues attracted about 5% of the population who spent on average about 2 hours when they attended. Activities included movies, concerts, theatres and the library.⁶ On average, 27% of Australians aged 15 and over actually participated in sport or outdoor activities each day in 1997. Those who participated spent an average of 1 hour and 43 minutes of their free time each day.⁷

The average amount of time people spent on recreational pursuits decreased by 90 minutes per day from 1992 to 1997. There was a decrease of 43 minutes in the average time spent on audio visual media (which includes watching television and videos). There was also a decrease in the time spent talking, from 171 minutes to 162 minutes per day.⁵

From 1992 to 1997, there was a decline in Australians' involvement in formal and informal sport. On an average day, there was little change in the average time spent but the participation rate for men fell from 12% to 9% and for women from 5% to 4%.⁵

million to 2.5 million) and Rugby Union (from 329,900 to 673,600). Conversely, there was a decrease in the number of persons attending outdoor cricket matches and competitions between 1995 and 2002 (falling from 1.1 million to 0.9 million).⁸

Data on the level of the participation in physical activities also portrays a relatively positive image of social participation in Australia. In 2002, 62% of the adult population (9.1 million people aged 18 and over) participated in physical activities for recreation, exercise or sport. More than half of these people participated in organised sports and physical recreation. Around 27% of Australians

aged 15 and over participated in sport or outdoor activities at least once each day in 1997.⁷

Children's participation in cultural and sporting activities did not change significantly between 2000 and 2003 – 95% of children participated in some form of culture or leisure activity in both years. Participation in organised cultural activities, organised sports and leisure activities were relatively stable across this period, however there was a rise in the proportion of children undertaking computer activities outside of school hours with the participation rate for Internet access increasing from 47% to 64%.⁹

The amount of time people will voluntarily give to cultural and leisure organisations or groups tells us about the value the Australian population places on these activities. Sport/recreation activities accounted for nearly a third (34%) of all voluntary work in Australia in 2000 – volunteers in these types of organisations contributed a total 147.7 million hours of their time to support these activities over this 12 month period. Volunteers in Arts/culture organisations committed 33.6 million hours (6% of total volunteer involvement).¹⁰ In the 12 months to April 2004, an estimated 18% of persons aged 15 and over (2.9 million people) participated in some form of paid or unpaid work relating to culture and leisure activities.¹¹

Some differences in Australia

In 2002, nine out of ten Indigenous people aged 15 and over had participated in social activities such as ceremonies, festivals and visiting a museum or art gallery in the previous three months and about seven out of ten Indigenous people had attended a cultural event that year. Just under half (49%) of the Indigenous population aged 15 and over had participated in sport or physical recreation activities in 2002.¹²

Attendance at sporting events is higher for men (56%) than women (41%) in all age groups.⁷ In contrast, in 2002, attendance rates at cultural venues and events were consistently higher for women than men (90% of women compared to 87% of men).⁴ In terms of participation, a higher proportion of women (20%), than men (16%) aged 15 and over worked in a culture or leisure field,¹¹ however men are more likely to participate in sports and physical recreation activities (65% of men compared to 60% of women).⁷

In 2002, apart from dance performances, attendance rates at cultural venues and events for people living in the capital cities were higher than those for people in the rest of Australia. For most venues and events, residents in the Australian Capital Territory recorded the highest attendance rates. However, Victorian residents had the highest attendance rate for musicals and operas, South Australian residents the highest rate for other performing arts and Northern Territory residents the highest rate for botanic gardens.⁴ Attendance at sports events was reasonably consistent across all of the states with the NT reporting the highest attendance rate (57%) and NSW the lowest (44%).⁸

Factors influencing change

The availability of free time is an important factor to participation in culture and leisure activities. Many changes that took place during the 20th century theoretically should have resulted in an increase in the leisure time available to households, however in many households the additional 'free' time has been filled by increased work responsibilities.¹

Technology is one such area where change has the potential to increase the amount of leisure time available (i.e. through the development of labour saving devices), however technological change also presents other opportunities and risks for the culture and leisure sector. New technologies allow new forms of cultural expression (for example, visual arts may be enhanced through the use of multimedia technologies), but may threaten the sustainability of traditional forms of expression. The rights of artists are seen to be particularly threatened by new technologies that facilitate the unlawful reproduction of materials protected by copyright, however these same technologies increase options for interpersonal communication and consequently, may increase cultural networks.¹

Demographic change can also have an impact on the types of culture and leisure activities undertaken. Reflecting the changing preferences for activities through an individual's life cycle (e.g. higher attendance at live music events for people aged 18–25 than those aged 55–64, and the reverse for classical music concerts),⁴ the ageing of the Australian population will affect the types of culture and leisure activities which people participate in. In particular, the movement of the

baby boomer cohort into retirement may have implications for the nature of and demand for culture and leisure activities and related facilities.¹

Links to other dimensions of progress

Many leisure activities have a positive impact on health by providing relaxation and physical activity and extending social networks. Participation in sports and active leisure is seen as a crucial element in strategies aimed at maintaining and improving the physical and mental health of Australians.

Participating in cultural and recreational activities is a form social participation which can have benefits to individual's wellbeing. This participation can also support the development of social cohesion, integrate communities in positive ways and build social capital – people can become socially connected through arts and sports activities, develop skills and contribute to the cultural identity of their community.

The idea of leisure as those activities enjoyed in an individual's 'free time' – in terms of freedom from obligations or duty and in terms of the way in which the time is spent – also includes activities with negative social implications. A range of criminal activities (such as graffiti and vandalism) and activities that can be clearly linked to negative social outcomes (e.g. gambling and drug use) remain leisure choices for some Australians.

Culture and leisure industries are recognised as growth industries, and are becoming an increasingly important sector of the Australian economy.¹

See also the commentaries *National income, Health, Family, community and social cohesion, and Communication*.

Cultural trade

Australian culture has evolved over many years and continues to be influenced by the diverse backgrounds of people who have migrated to Australia. Overseas trade in goods and services also has an impact on Australian culture that extends well beyond its economic significance, as the imports of items such as films, music and books influence the way Australians think and act.

In 2002–03 Australia exported \$97m worth of printed books, with paintings, drawings and pastels executed entirely by hand (\$72m) and brochures, leaflets and similar printed matter and children's drawing and colouring books (\$65m) also making large contributions to the total value of exported cultural goods. The largest cultural commodity imported in 2002–03 was television receivers (\$754m).

Australia earned \$342m from other countries for cultural and recreational services in 2002–03, approximately 1% of its total earnings from services in that year. This figure has remained relatively constant over recent years, with the exception of 2000–01 when the inclusion of television rights to the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games boosted it to about 4%. Australia paid \$986m to other countries for cultural and recreational services in 2002–03, with audiovisual and related services accounting for 69% of that total, and music royalties a further 21%. This represented approximately 3% of all Australia's payments for services in that year.⁶

Endnotes

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, *Measuring Wellbeing*, cat.no.4160.0, ABS, Canberra
- 2 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, *What is Cultural Diversity?* <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13031&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html> last viewed 16 February 2006.
- 3 Jary, D. And Jary, J. 2000, *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, Harper Collins Publishers, Glasgow.
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003, *Attendance at selected cultural venues and events 2002*, cat.no.4114.0, ABS, Canberra
- 5 Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998, *How Australians use their time, 1997*, cat. No. 4153.0, ABS, Canberra.
- 6 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Arts and culture in Australia: a statistical overview*, cat. No. 4172.0, ABS, Canberra
- 7 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003, *Sport and Recreation: a statistical overview*, cat.no. 4156.0, ABS, Canberra
- 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003, *Sports attendance 2002*, cat.no.4174.0, ABS, Canberra
- 9 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities, April 2003*, cat.no. 4901.0, ABS, Canberra

- 10 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, *Voluntary Work 2000*, cat.no.4441.0, ABS, Canberra
- 11 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Work in selected culture and leisure activities April 2004*, cat.no. 6281.0, ABS, Canberra
- 12 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002*, cat.no.4714.0, ABS, Canberra