



Australian Social Trends June 2011

Culture and the arts

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Culture and the arts

Culture and the arts are an important part of the Australian lifestyle. They provide a means for meeting and connecting with people, promoting a positive community identity and enabling people to feel socially included. By being part of a socially inclusive society, Australians have the opportunity to feel valued, and are more likely to participate in employment, education and training, and voluntary work.¹

Culture and the arts come in many forms of venues and events. Libraries assist with learning and education, art galleries and museums with conservation, and cinemas with relaxation and escapism.²

Cultural industries also contribute to the Australian economy through employment and trade, and assist with fostering creativity and innovation. Trade in cultural goods and services, both within Australia and internationally, encourage cultural diversity and economic development, and also provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas.³

The value we place on culture and the arts can be shown through attendance rates, the time Australians devote to culture and the arts and how much money is spent on them. This article examines these aspects for people aged 15 years and over. For children's involvement in cultural activities see ABS [Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities](#) (cat. no. 4901.0).

Data sources and definitions

The main data source for this article is the attendance at cultural venues and events topic in the ABS 2009–10 Multipurpose Household Survey (MPHS).

The MPHS looked at people aged 15 years and over across Australia but excludes people living in very remote areas. This is expected to have only a minor impact on any aggregate estimates that are produced for individual states and territories, except in the Northern Territory where this group accounts for around 23% of the population.

Culture. There are two common definitions of culture, one describing our way of life and shared values, such as youth culture or urban culture. The other definition equates culture with the arts, such as film, visual arts, literature and music. For this article the focus will be on aspects of culture which are expressed through the arts.

Selected cultural venues and events include: art galleries, museums, zoos and aquariums, botanic gardens, libraries, classical and popular music concerts, theatre and dance performances, musicals and operas, cinemas and archives. Other venues and events are not separately identified.

Dependent children refers to all people aged less than 15 years and people aged 15–24 years who are full-time students, have a parent in the household, and do not have a partner or child of their own in the household.

Attendance

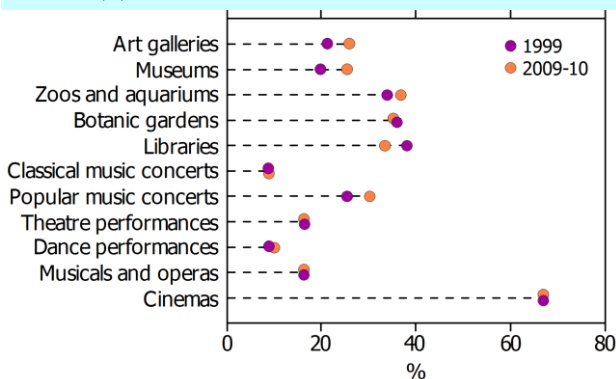
During 2009–10, nearly nine in ten Australians (86% or 15 million people) aged 15 years and over attended at least one selected cultural venue or event. This is similar to the rate 10 years ago.

In 2009–10, the most popular cultural event and venue attended by people aged 15 years and over was the cinema, with 67% or 11.7 million Australians attending. Attending zoos and aquariums (37%), botanic gardens (35%) and libraries (34%) were the next most popular venues or events.

...frequency of visits

Nearly half (46%) of those who attended libraries went 11 times or more during 2009–10. Of the people who went to the cinema, 23% went 6–10 times and 15% went 11–20 times. However, people attending museums, and zoos and aquariums were more likely to have attended these venues only once (52% and 48% respectively).

Attendance at selected cultural venues and events(a)



(a) People aged 15 years and over.

Source: ABS 2010 [Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2009-10](#) (cat. no. 4114.0)

Who attends cultural venues and events?

Personal characteristics can influence what cultural venues and events people attend, and the number of times they attend. Where people live can limit what is available for them to attend, and their age and whether they are partnered or have children may influence what type of events they attend. In addition, a person's or family's income may influence what they can afford to attend.

...younger or older people?

During 2009–10, attendance at cultural venues and events was generally higher for younger age groups, with attendance rates declining with age.⁴

Younger people (aged 15–17 years) were more likely than older people to attend the cinema (93%), libraries (40%), and popular music concerts (38%), whilst older people (aged 55 years and over) were nearly twice as likely to attend classical music concerts (13% compared with 7% for those aged 15–17 years).

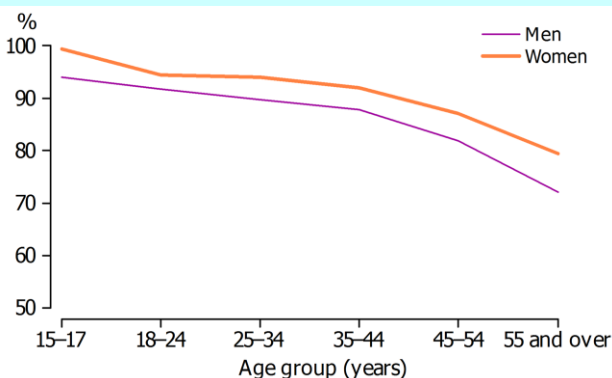
However, 15–17 year olds were just as likely to attend art galleries and theatre performances as older people (both 27% for art galleries and 19% compared with 17% for theatre performances).

...men or women?

In 2009–10, women were more likely to go to a cultural venue or event, with 88% of women having attended at least one cultural venue or event compared with 83% of men.

The cinema was the most popular venue or event to attend by both men and women (64% and 70% respectively), followed by concerts or other performing arts events (47% for men and 58% for women), then zoos and aquariums (34% for men and 40% for women). Attendance at archives was the least popular venue or event for both men and women (3.2% and 3.8% respectively).

Attendance(a) rates at cultural venues and events by sex and age – 2009-10



(a) Total attending at least one venue or event.

Source: ABS 2010 *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2009-10* (cat. no. 4114.0)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and the arts

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are some of the oldest cultural histories in the world, going back at least 50,000 years.⁵

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities keep their cultural heritage alive by passing their knowledge of arts, rituals and performances from one generation to another, speaking and teaching languages, and protecting cultural materials, sacred and significant sites, and objects.⁵

Cultural activities include arts and crafts, music, dance or theatre, and writing or telling stories. In 2008, around 92,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over (28%) participated in one or more of these activities. Of these selected activities, arts and crafts were the most popular (17%), followed by writing or storytelling (15%) and music, dance or theatre (11%).

Participation in selected cultural activities was higher for those Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over living in very remote areas (38% overall) compared with those living in non-remote areas (25%).

For further information see ABS *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview, 2010* (cat. no. 4172.0).

...where were they born?

Attending cultural venues or events is one way all Australians are able to engage with the broader Australian community in which they live and generate a shared sense of belonging.¹

In 2009–10, people born overseas were less likely to attend cultural venues or events than Australian born residents (83% compared with 87%). Attendance rates were higher across most activities for people born in Australia; however, overseas born Australians had higher attendance at botanic gardens and classical music concerts (38% and 11% compared with 34% and 8% for Australian born).

People born in Australia or non-main English-speaking countries were less likely to attend cultural venues or events than people born in main English-speaking countries such as the UK and Canada (87% and 78% compared with 91%).

...where they live?

In 2009–10, people from the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory were the most likely to attend a cultural venue or event (93% and 91% respectively), while people living in

Main English-speaking countries

For people born overseas, main English-speaking countries are the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and the United States of America. Being from a non-main English-speaking country does not imply a lack of proficiency in English.

New South Wales and Tasmania had lower rates of attendance (83% and 84% respectively).

Attendance rates were generally higher across all selected venues or events for people living in capital cities compared with those living outside capital cities. Of the people living in capital cities, 87% had attended at least one cultural venue or event during 2009–10, compared with 83% of people living outside of capital cities.

...household type?

People living in households which include dependent children were more likely to have attended cultural activities than people living in households without dependent children.

In 2009–10, 91% of people (aged 15 years and over) in households with dependent children had attended cultural venues or events, whilst 83% of people in couple only households had attended. People living alone were also less likely to have attended a cultural venue or event during the 12 months to June 2010 (78%). However, this varies with age, with 91% of young people (aged 18–24) who lived by themselves attending at least one venue or event compared with 72% of those aged 55 years and over.

Of the people who attended cultural venues or events, those in households with dependent children were more likely to attend cinemas (82%) and zoos and aquariums (51%). Conversely, people in couple only and lone person households were more likely to attend art galleries (33% and 35% respectively), classical music concerts (both 14%), and botanic gardens (45% and 43% respectively).

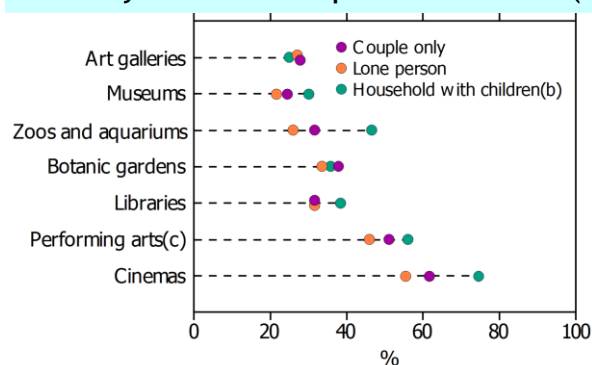
Attendance(a) at cultural venues or events by states and territories – 2009-10(b)

	%
New South Wales	83.2
Victoria	87.2
Queensland	87.0
South Australia	87.6
Western Australia	86.2
Tasmania	83.9
Northern Territory(c)	91.4
Australian Capital Territory	93.0
Australia	85.8

- (a) Total attending at least one venue or event.
 (b) People aged 15 years and over.
 (c) Refers to mainly urban areas only.

Source: ABS 2010 [Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2009-10](#) (cat. no. 4114.0)

Attendance at selected cultural venues and events by household composition – 2009-10(a)



- (a) People aged 15 years and over.
 (b) People living in households which include dependent children.
 (c) People attending at least one performing arts event such as classical music concert, dance performances or musical and operas during the 12 month period.

Source: ABS 2010 [Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2009-10](#) (cat. no. 4114.0)

...household income?

There is a relationship between the level of household income and attendance at cultural activities.

In 2009–10, people in the lowest equivalised gross household income quintile were less likely to attend a cultural venue or event than those in the highest quintile (72% compared with 94%).

The most popular cultural venues and events for people in the lowest income quintile were generally the same as for those in the highest quintile.

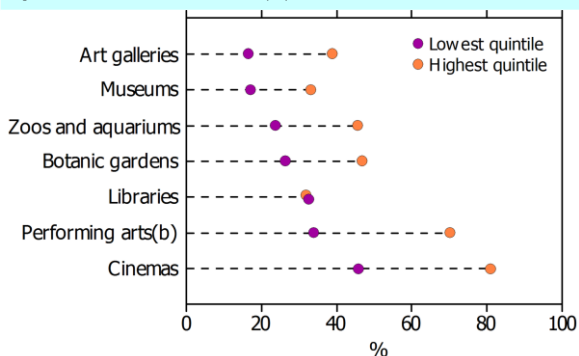
However, the proportion of people attending who were in the lowest quintile was significantly lower than those in the highest quintile. Attending cinemas was the most popular activity for both groups (46% for the lowest and 81% for the highest quintile), whilst performing arts events were also popular (34% for the lowest and 70% for the highest quintile).

Income definitions

Equivalised household income. Equivalising adjusts actual household income to take into account the different needs of households of different size and composition. There are economic advantages associated with living with others, because many household resources can be shared.

Income quintiles are derived by ranking all the population from lowest to highest income and then dividing that population into five equal groups. The lowest quintile is made up of the 20% of the population with the lowest income. For more information about household income measures see [ABS Household Income and Income Distribution](#) (cat. no. 6523.0).

Attendance at selected cultural venues or events by equivalised gross household income quintiles – 2009-10(a)



(a) People aged 15 years and over.

(b) People attending at least one performing arts event such as classical music concert, dance performances or musical and operas during the 12 month period.

Source: ABS 2010 *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2009-10* (cat. no. 4114.0)

How much do households spend?

According to the ABS 2003-04 Household Expenditure Survey, the total household expenditure on cultural goods and services was \$14,694m, equivalent to an average of \$36.40 per household per week.^{6,7}

The most popular goods and services to spend money on was literature (\$3,400m), of which \$2,618m was spent on books and newspapers. Household payments on pay TV fees accounted for \$1,084m per year of the Broadcasting, electronic media and film category, and televisions and home entertainment systems (\$1,913m per year) were the main contributors to the 'other culture' category.⁶

Working and volunteering in culture and the arts

...working

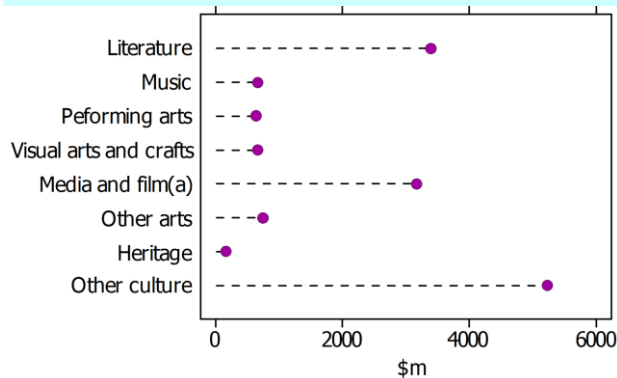
In 2009-10, 210,000 people worked in a cultural occupation (in their main job) such as a musician or library assistant, accounting for around 1.9% of all employed people. This was similar to 1999-2000, when cultural occupations accounted for 2.0% of all employed people.

More men than women worked in cultural occupations in 2009-10 (55% and 45% respectively), with men more likely to be employed full time (63%) than women (37%).

The average number of hours worked by men and women employed full time in cultural occupations was similar (42 and 40 hours respectively), as was hours for men and women employed part time (15 and 16 hours respectively).

The economic importance of culture and the arts extends beyond the employment of people in cultural occupations. Employment is also

Annual household expenditure on cultural goods and services – 2003-04



(a) Includes broadcasting and electronic media.

Source: ABS 2003-04 Household Expenditure Survey

generated for people in non-cultural occupations within cultural industries, such as a cleaner in a library.⁶ In 2009-10, around 101,000 people were employed in non-cultural occupations within cultural industries.

...volunteering

According to the 2006 Voluntary Work Survey, around 207,000 people (aged 18 years and over) volunteered for arts and heritage organisations. Of these, more than a third (39%) were aged 55 years and over, and 63% were women.

The frequency of voluntary work for arts and heritage organisations varied, with half (50%) of people having volunteered at least once a week, 12% once a fortnight, and 18% having volunteered at least once a month. In 2006, 30.6 million hours were volunteered for arts and heritage organisations.

Cultural trade

The Australian cultural industry not only creates goods and services for domestic consumption, but also for export to the world market.

Australia's cultural trade covers such goods as films, books and music, whilst services incorporate cultural tourism, heritage services, and other audio visual and related services.

Cultural trade can be divided into two areas; cultural imports and exports, and cultural outputs. Whilst the import and export of cultural goods and services is an absolute measurement of what has been bought or sold between Australia and other countries, cultural output is a measure of the significance of an industry to the Australian economy and the value of its output compared with those of other industries.⁶

...cultural goods

Australia continues to import more cultural goods than it exports.⁸

During the year 2009-10, Australian cultural imports totalled \$2,436.6m or 1.2% of all goods

Government funding of culture and the arts

Government funding supports arts and cultural venues and events such as libraries and museums, in addition to individuals, such as musicians. The funding for culture and the arts is distributed in the form of direct funding, subsidies and grants.⁶

The Commonwealth, state and territory, and local governments contributed \$6,772.5m for funding cultural activities in 2008–09. This was an increase of 7.8% from 2007–08 (\$6,281.1m).⁹

Environmental heritage, which includes botanic gardens, and national and state parks, received the largest funding for culture and the arts during 2008–09 (\$1,604m or 24% of total Commonwealth and state and territory funding). Radio and television received \$1,392.8m, representing a further 21% of funding.⁹

imported into Australia. Over the same period exports of Australian cultural goods totalled \$539.8m, or 0.3% of all goods exported from Australia.

The value of imports of cultural goods as a percentage of total goods imported has more than halved since 2000–01, from 2.6% of all goods imported into Australia. The value of exports of cultural goods has decreased slightly in the same period (from 0.4% of all Australian exports).¹⁰

...cultural services

In 2008–09, the cultural services provided by Australia (\$163m) to the rest of the world were one eighth the value of cultural services provided to Australia (\$1,329m). Cultural services provided by Australia are of comparatively low value in the international trade in services (0.3%). Of all services provided to Australia from overseas in 2008–09, 2.4% were cultural services.

The cultural service traded of highest value was television royalties, where services worth \$837m were provided to Australia and \$88m provided by Australia.

...output of cultural industries

In 2006–07, Australian production of cultural goods and services totalled \$45,890m. Publishing (except for internet and music)

accounted for 31% of cultural production, followed by broadcasting accounting for a further 20%, then printing (including recorded media) with 19%.¹⁰

After taking into account the costs of producing cultural goods and services, the industry value added for cultural goods and services in 2006–07 was \$21,618m, which is similar to that of the value added of telecommunication services (\$18,207m).^{11,12}

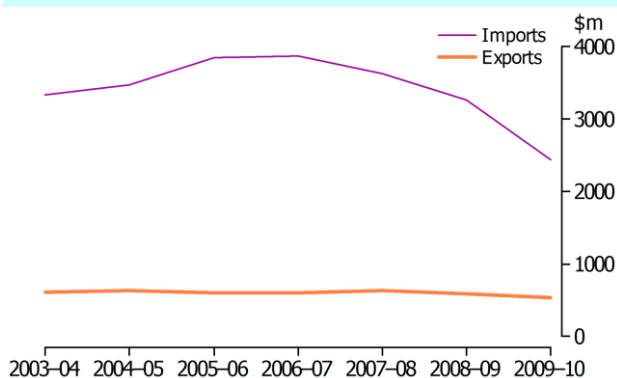
Looking ahead

Social inclusion strategies aim to encourage social, civic and economic participation within communities. The networks developed through involvement in cultural activities and organisations may benefit health, education and employment outcomes for individuals while fostering community strength and resilience.

Endnotes

- 1 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, Social Inclusion, viewed 20 April 2011, <www.socialinclusion.gov.au>.
- 2 Arts Research Monitor, March 2008, *Social effects of Culture: Exploratory Statistical Evidence*, 2011, viewed 20 April 2011 <<http://www.hillstrategies.com/index.php>>.
- 3 UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Culture: Creative Industries* viewed 20 April 2011, <www.unesco.org>.
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2009-10*, cat. no. 4114.0, ABS, Canberra, <www.abs.gov.au>.
- 5 Australian Government, 2011, *Australian Indigenous cultural heritage*, viewed 12 May 2011, <<http://australia.gov.au>>.
- 6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview, 2010*, cat. no. 4172.0, ABS, Canberra, <www.abs.gov.au>.
- 7 Australian Bureau of Statistics expenditure data for 2009-10 will be available later in 2011.
- 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia, Mar 2011*, cat. no. 5368.0, ABS, Canberra, <www.abs.gov.au>.
- 9 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, *Cultural Funding by Government, Australia, 2008-09*, cat. no. 4183.0, ABS, Canberra, <www.abs.gov.au>.
- 10 Australian Bureau of Statistics, July 2003, Culture and recreation news, Jul 2003, *Cultural Trade in Goods and Services*, cat. no. 4147.4.55.001, ABS, Canberra, <www.abs.gov.au>.
- 11 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, *Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables – electronic publication, Final release 2006-07 tables*, cat. no. 5209.0.55.001, ABS, Canberra, <www.abs.gov.au>.
- 12 For this article cultural industries include; publishing (except for internet and music publishing); motion picture and sound recording; broadcasting (except internet); library and other information services; heritage, creative and performing arts; and printing (including the reproduction of recorded media).

Total trade in cultural goods



Source: ABS 2010 *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview 2010* (cat. no. 4172.0)

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