

CULTURE + COMMUNITY IN A TIME OF TRANSFORMATION

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AUDIENCE RESEARCH

Methodology

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Goals of the Study

When this Culture & Community focused research originated in early 2020, it was intended to inform not just resilience but also innovation and progress toward equity in the cultural sector, and to give the public a voice in the future of cultural engagement. We understood that the pandemic would accelerate fundamental change in the sector and, as such, represented a crucial opportunity to address decades, even centuries of structural exclusion and Eurocentric cultural norms.

Our Wave 1 research was designed to uncover what people have been going through emotionally and physically during these painful times, and what they need from culture now, as opposed to the likelihood, timing and conditions for people to resume engaging with culture in the ways they had engaged before Covid-19. But this first wave was conducted before the murder of George Floyd ignited a national upswell of anger and activism and the Movement for Black Lives began to reshape the discourse around race and racism in every aspect of American life. We have now rededicated the initiative to racial equity, and in this wave of research we hoped to amplify BIPOC voices and illuminate the role of arts and culture organizations and experiences in social change. With input from Yancey Consulting, Slover Linett and LaPlaca Cohen, the Wave 2 survey was designed to not only support the self-examination already underway in the creativity and culture field and help make organizations and practices more inclusive and equitable, but also to help the sector as a whole play a more central role in the broader ecosystem of social change.

Indeed, the need is more pressing now than when the pandemic began, because Covid-19 has become just one of several intersecting crises, and cultural organizations of all kinds — traditional and progressive, large and small, formal and informal, nonprofit and otherwise — need to be in genuine dialogue with their audiences, participants, and communities as they decide how they can contribute and serve. With this in mind, the Culture & Community in a Time of Crisis Wave 2 survey was designed to be both a tracking study to gauge change since the early days of the pandemic and a new inquiry designed in response to the current moment.

Sampling Overview

Probability sampling, in which respondents are chosen at random, is the standard basis for selecting respondents so that conclusions can be made from a sample to the full population. It relies on the principle that everyone has an equal chance of being chosen (at random), so you can get a representative sample by hearing from a very small proportion of the population. However, given the statistical advantage of large samples and the costs of collecting random samples, statistical methods (weighting techniques) exist to combine samples of different kinds.

In this situation, we're combining a probability sample (AmeriSpeak) with nonprobability samples from the lists of arts & culture organizations. We've partnered with statisticians at NORC, pioneers in combining samples, to create one sample that's representative of the U.S. population that "gives weights" to individual respondents from both the AmeriSpeak sample and the list samples. This approach results in an extremely large total sample size, which allows us to do a lot of dividing and comparing sub-groups within the data set while still being representative of the U.S. population as a whole.

Sampling Framework

We developed a dual-sampling framework for this study because there were two groups that we felt were crucial to hear and learn from: the general public and active arts and culture attenders. In reality, these groups overlap extensively, and our approach to handling that overlap is discussed below.

General Public Sample

For the sample of the general public, we collaborated with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), a leading research center based at the University of Chicago. NORC maintains a panel, AmeriSpeak, that provides coverage for over 97 percent of U.S. households (Yang, Ganesh, Mulrow, and Pineau 2018).

All U.S. respondents (age 18 or older) were eligible for participation. Statistical weights for the AmeriSpeak sample were calculated using panel base sampling weights to start (the inverse of probability of selection from the NORC national frame) and were then raked to external population totals associated with age, sex, education, race/ ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, and Census Division. The external population totals are obtained from the February 2020 U.S. Census Current Population Survey.

In Wave 1 of our study we collected 2,027 responses using a general-population sampling strata based on age, race/Hispanic ethnicity, education, and gender (48 sampling strata in total). For Wave 2, we collected another 2,000 responses through the general population sample with the same set of strata. In addition, for Wave 2 we intentionally over-sampled 750 individuals from minority groups (lower income, lower education, African American or Black, and Hispanic or Latino) where we saw the greatest gaps between the population-based sample and the list-based sample in Wave 1. This oversample improves the validity of our estimates by providing larger sample sizes for analysis of these underrepresented groups. Additionally, because of specific requests from funders for separate analyses and reports, oversamples were done for individuals from Massachusetts and individuals who were older than 75 years.

In total, we collected responses from a sample of 3,617 adult American respondents through the AmeriSpeak panel, with a weighted cumulative response rate of 4.58% and a margin of error of +/-2.34%; the panel survey was fielded between April 9 and April 30, 2021. In addition to the high level of representative coverage of the NORC panel, we chose to work with the AmeriSpeak team because of the statistical expertise in weighting data of their personnel, particularly with respect to combining probability and non-probability samples.

Arts and Cultural Attenders Sample

For the sample of arts and culture attenders, we also invited any primarily adult-serving arts and culture organization in the United States to send the survey to a portion of its audience email lists at no cost to the organizations. In return, these organizations were promised that they would have access to their respondents' survey response data, and that those responses could be compared to the national sample.

We started by inviting the 653 organizations that had participated in Wave 1 of this study (Spring of 2020) to be part of Wave 2. We then sought to broaden the kinds of organizations in our sample by actively inviting new organizations from categories of institutions who were underrepresented in our Wave 1 work: BIPOC-serving organizations¹, cultural organizations located in rural parts of the country, festivals (film, food, crafts, music), libraries, for-profit arts, and national and city parks. We reached out directly to membership and convening organizations connected to the categories above to initiate conversations about the research goals and invite their members to participate. Service organizations that promoted the study and encouraged participation on the part of their members included American Libraries Association, NIVA, Institute of Urban Parks, High Line Network, ACTA, National Performance Arts Network, Native Arts & Culture Foundation, and the League of American Orchestras. We also worked with a group of eighteen advisors including practitioners and methodology experts to help shape the research questions and to spread the invitation through their networks. Finally, we shared this opportunity through social media and emails to our networks of clients and colleagues. In total, 300 new-to-the-study organizations participated in Wave 2.

¹BIPOC-serving organizations are those whose primary audiences and/or content is focused on Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color.

Participating Organizations

In total, 532 organizations distributed the survey to a portion of their lists. Those participating organizations included arts councils, community focused organizations, crafts, arts schools, film centers, radio stations, architecture centers, botanical gardens, historical societies, libraries, museums of all types (art, cultural, history, science, natural history, children's), zoos and aquaria, dance companies or venues, orchestras, opera companies, performing arts centers, theater companies or venues, and photography centers. They had a median budget of between US \$2,500,000 and \$5,000,000, a median staff size of between 10 and 25 full-time employees, and a median audience size of between 50,000 and 100,000 visitors or attenders per year².

The organizations represented most heavily are museums and the performing arts (see Table 1). Organizations from 41 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and 1 Canadian province³ participated in the research (108 from the Midwest, 188 from the Northeast, 126 from the South, and 105 from the West Census Region, 1 from Puerto Rico, and 4 from Canada).

The full list of participating organizations is available at www.culturetrack.com/covidstudy

²All figures reflect pre-COVID totals.

³Canadian respondents are not included in weighting schemes and are thus not included in any analysis.

Table 1

The number and proportion of participating organizations classified by organization's primary focus (self-selected)

Organization Primary Focus	Number of Participating Organizations	Proportion of Participating Organizations
Artist Communities & Advocacy Organizations	6	1%
Arts and Culture in Community (arts and...)	57	11%
Arts Education	15	3%
Dance	17	3%
Fairs and Festivals	5	1%
Folk & Traditional Arts	1	>1%
Libraries & Literary Arts	20	4%
Local Arts Agency, Presenters	16	3%
Media Arts	2	>1%
Museums	190	36%
Music	82	15%
Other	36	7%
Parks, Zoos, and Botanical Gardens	29	5%
Theater & Comedy	56	11%
Grand Total	532	100.00%

Distribution

Participating organizations were asked to send the survey to a sample of up to 5,000 people randomly drawn from their email lists. For those with email lists of fewer than 1,000, we allowed them to post the survey on their social media channels as well to increase their sample size. At least 24 organizations reported that they utilized this method. We provided recommended survey invitation language in each of the 10 languages⁴ we offered the survey in, along with an organization-specific survey link (URL). In the suggested invitation language, we noted that participants may receive the invitation from more than one organization, and we asked them to please respond to the survey only once. As an incentive, respondents were offered the chance to win one of twenty-five VISA gift cards each worth \$100. A website with frequently asked questions, information about the organizations involved in the study, and the drawing rules was available to respondents. The survey was hosted on the Decipher survey platform, a sophisticated online research tool operated by [FocusVision](#) – who agreed to provide the platform free of charge as an in-kind donation to the cultural sector. The survey was also translated from English into 9 other languages⁴ by [MultiLingual Connections](#) – a Chicago-area translation agency.

The survey was emailed to more than 2.1 million people through participating organizations and shared on social media to up to 100,000 followers. Given the scale of that sample, we needed to ensure that survey respondents wouldn't overwhelm the Decipher platform. Organizations were provided a date and time window for distribution between April 5th and April 9th, 2021 with backup options available on April 10-13. The list-sample survey was kept open through April 26, 2021. We received 74,742 responses which results in a response rate of approximately 3% (not all organizations reported to us how many survey invitations they distributed).

Although this side of the sampling frame was meant to capture arts attenders and subscribers, museum visitors and members, and other active cultural participants, we should emphasize that not all of these respondents were highly affiliated with the organization from whom they received the invitation. Such lists

⁴Languages offered: Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese (traditional and simplified), English, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Distribution

include people whose emails were collected by the organization for a spectrum of reasons, e.g. in exchange for free on-site wifi, to register for an event or program, or to purchase tickets, memberships, or subscriptions.

Dual-frame Weighting

For our analysis, it was important to combine the two samples, the representative AmeriSpeak panel sample and the non-representative audience-list sample, into one dataset representative of the general U.S. population. We worked with statisticians at NORC to create a set of weights drawing from what we know of the responses of the population-representative sample to the same set of questions, then applied those weights to each respondent from the audience-list sample to bring that “cultural oversample” into line with the actual proportion of Americans with those levels and types of arts participation.

Why Weighting?

These weights help counter the affinity bias we know exists on the lists of cultural organizations toward those with the highest levels of affiliation (e.g., donors or members/subscribers) to better reflect the average person participating in arts and culture activities. In addition, they provide a robust view of the average Americans' behaviors, perceptions, and desires with cultural attenders brought into proportion with their actual distribution in the U.S. population. We found large gaps between these two samples that weighting helps to correct – the unweighted responses from arts and culture organizations were disproportionately white, compared to the panel data which reflects the total U.S. population (see Table 2).

Table 2

The proportion of survey respondents by Hispanic or Latinx ethnicity and race for the unweighted list distribution and weighted AmeriSpeak Panel data⁵

	Unweighted list data (n=67,912)	Weighted AmeriSpeak Panel data
Hispanic or Latinx	6%	17%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5%	5%
Black or African American	4%	12%
Native American	<1%	<1%
White or Caucasian	80%	63%
Two or more races	3%	3%
Other race	2%	1%

The combined weights were constructed using a machine-learning procedure to identify the variables that were most influential in predicting being in the non-probability (i.e., audience-list) sample (Yang, Ganesh, Mulrow, & Pineau, 2019; Mulrow, Ganesh, Pineau, & Yang, 2020). The most influential variable was past cultural attendance, but the weights also included activities during COVID-19, emotional impacts of COVID-19, past affiliation with arts and culture (e.g., donation, subscription, membership), education level, employment status, income, metro area, race and ethnicity, region, and age.

⁵In accordance with the Census, we define race as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic or LatinX respondent origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken out in two categories, Hispanic or LatinX respondent or Latino and Not Hispanic or LatinX respondent or Latino. Hispanic or LatinX respondents may report as any race.

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