

RESOURCES and FURTHER READING

Engaging New Audiences: The Research on Barriers to Attending and Returning to Arts Organizations in Washington

ArtsFund

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About this document

This document contains information and references related to the presentation on March 1, 2023, for ArtsFund as well as links to more information about concepts that align with key themes. Please note that data presented for ArtsFund is contemporary and considers the organization's more specific region and environment. The articles linked in this document do not contain the specific data presented to attendees; rather, they are intended as a resource to enable a deeper understanding of the concepts and strategies discussed.

About the data

IMPACTS Experience collects data from a variety of sources. For more information, see:

- [Our Data Approach](#)
- [The National Awareness, Attitudes and Usage Study](#)
- [Select Clients and Partners](#)

How urgent is the need to expand audiences in Washington State?

As the pandemic continues to shift the ways in which people want and expect to engage with cultural organizations, one of the most pressing questions is how these organizations can reengage and expand their audiences. Negative substitution is an ongoing concern, particularly for performance-based institutions.

- [Cultural Entities Are Not Expanding Audiences Fast Enough to Sustain Attendance. Here's What This Means \(DATA\)](#)
- [Negative Substitution: Why Cultural Organizations Must Better Engage New Audiences FAST \(DATA\)](#)

What is the most effective way to expand audiences?

The general population falls into four cohorts related to cultural organization visitation: active, inactive, unlikely, and non-visitors. An understanding of these subsets helps cultural organizations understand where to focus their resources and who is most likely to attend (inactive visitors, who already have an interest in visiting, but have not in the last three years).

- [Active, Inactive, and Unlikely Visitors: What Cultural Organizations Need to Know](#)
- [Inactive Visitors Are Interested in Attending Cultural Organizations. Why Don't They?](#)
- [Have Cultural Entities Grown More Welcoming? Here's What the Public Thinks \(DATA\)](#)
- [Expanding Audiences: A Data Overview of the Current Condition for Cultural Entities](#)

While 18% of the United States public has visited any kind of cultural organization in the last three years as of end of year 2022, 15% of Washingtonians have attended a cultural organization. The reason for this difference lies primarily in the fact that Washington State has many rural areas compared to the overall average market, and a density of likely visitors particularly in higher population areas like Seattle. Thus, many Washingtonians have further to travel to attend a cultural institution given the comparative lack of density of cultural experiences.

What are the top barriers to activating inactive visitors in Washington State?

How can cultural organizations get inactive visitors through their doors? Learn why they aren't coming in the first place. Working to understand and alleviate barriers to attendance can help motivate visitors to attend.

- [Why Aren't Interested Visitors Attending? The Top Reasons Have Changed for Now \(DATA\)](#)
- [Breaking Down Data-Informed Barriers to Visitation for Cultural Organizations \(DATA\)](#)
- [The Five Biggest Barriers to Attending Cultural Entities in 2020 \(DATA\)](#)

The top barriers to attendance in Washington State are:

Preferring an alternative leisure activity

Top of the list for both exhibit-based and performance-based organizations, this barrier simply means that people have something else they want to do more (including stay at home!).

- [Data Update on Growing Cultural Organization Competition: The Couch](#)

Access challenges ("the hassle")

This barrier includes challenges related to visiting the institution: getting there, planning for the visit, buying tickets, etc.

- [More Pandemic, More Problems: The Hassle of Visiting Museums Has Increased](#)

Have already visited ("nothing new to do or see")

Audiences often cite this barrier when organizations fall into the trap of the "special" programs or exhibitions cycle and inadvertently train their visitors to only come when the latest and greatest new thing is available.

- ["There's Nothing New to See": How Major Exhibits Really Impact Long-Term Attendance](#)
- [Special Exhibitions vs. Permanent Collections \(DATA\)](#)
- [Death by Curation: The Exhibit Strategy that Threatens Visitation and Cultural Center Survival \(DATA\)](#)

Cost-related factors

Rising inflation exacerbated this barrier in 2022. However, despite the increased concern, research shows that admission prices are still not generally a barrier to visitation – and that lowering them may hurt cultural organizations more than it will help.

- [What Do Current Economic Concerns Mean for Admission Prices? \(DATA\)](#)
- [Admission Price is NOT a Primary Barrier for Cultural Center Visitation \(DATA\)](#)
- [Admission Fees Aren't What Keep Millennials from Visiting Cultural Organizations \(DATA\)](#)

What about unlikely visitors? Why aren't they attending?

Unlikely visitors are those people in the population who won't attend cultural organizations of their own volition but will come if they have a reason to do so. Barriers to attendance for this cohort include preferring to do something else; having had a negative past experience; and believing that the experience is not for "people like me."

- [They're Just Not That Into You: What Cultural Organizations Need to Know About Non-Visitors \(DATA\)](#)

Contact

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