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**AMERICANS  
AND THE  
ARTS**



**Highlights  
from a nationwide survey  
of public opinion**

Conducted by the  
National Research Center of the Arts,  
an affiliate of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

The Americans and the Arts survey  
was sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

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## THE ARTS ARE ESSENTIAL, NOT ELITE

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This year's *Americans and the Arts* is the fifth in a series of surveys, beginning in 1973, which probe Americans' perceptions of and participation in the arts. One key finding has held true through all of them: the arts are not elite pastimes, but part of the very fabric of American life. A solid majority of Americans attend arts events, and large groups actively participate in art forms ranging from photography to ethnic dance. Every year more people attend arts events than sports events.

But the arts and those who support them now face their biggest challenge in the last 15 years. The continuing decline in leisure time for most Americans is beginning to take its toll on the arts. For the first time since the inception of this survey, the audience for the arts is contracting rather than expanding, with reported attendance levels down by about 12% since 1984.

Even so, the arts have managed to compete for Americans' dwindling free time with surprising success against such other leisure pursuits as sports, travel, and relaxing. But that is cold comfort; if the arts are to continue to thrive in the face of new time constraints, our society must look for new ways to bring them to the public.

That is why this edition of *Americans and the Arts* looks closely at the potential of videocassette recorders as a medium of growth for the arts. There is also an expanded section on Americans' attitudes—highly positive—toward the place of individual artists in society.

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Sponsoring *Americans and the Arts* goes hand in hand with Philip Morris's 30 years of support for arts activities ranging from museum exhibitions to theater and jazz performances and avant garde events. For us, the arts epitomize the spirit of innovation and challenge without which no business can thrive. We believe, moreover, that supporting the arts is one of the best ways to enhance the quality of life in the communities where we live and do business.

We hope this survey encourages the exploration of new forms of presentation as well as ways to build on traditional ones, so that artists and arts organizations can continue their vital role in the life of communities across America.



— Hamish Maxwell  
Chairman and  
Chief Executive Officer  
Philip Morris Companies Inc.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The pressures of life in two-income families in a service economy have reduced the leisure time that Americans report by 8% in the three years since the last survey, and by 37% compared with 15 years ago. Remarkably, the arts seem to be holding their own in the ever-diminishing number of free hours available to Americans. But if the arts are to grow, it seems they must reach out to people in new ways. In particular, videocassette recorders hold enormous potential as a way of reaching larger audiences.

*The Decline of Free Time.* Americans report a median 16.6 hours of leisure time each week, a decline of 9.6 hours over the last 15 years.

*Arts Under Pressure.* For the first time since 1973, the number of people who say they attend arts events has fallen: by 12% since 1984. Hardest hit have been:

- opera and musical theater — down 38%
- classical music concerts — down 26%
- live theater — down 25%.

The arts obviously face a mounting challenge. Although Americans remain strongly interested in the arts, new avenues of reaching audiences must be explored.

*Active Participation Fares Better than Attendance.* Not only has the number of people who attend arts events declined, but so has the number who say they personally participate in arts activities like painting or creative writing. Of 11 disciplines examined, only 2 — photography and dance — increased their levels of participation. However, for participation the decline was less pronounced than in attendance—3% since 1984. Blacks, who report less leisure time

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than whites, nonetheless have maintained higher levels of participation in creative writing, dance, and choral singing.

People Find Arts Events Inaccessible. The survey suggests that a scarcity of arts facilities and presentations are key impediments to the growth of arts audiences.

- 39% of those surveyed say they have no concert hall in their community.
- There is a great appetite for more arts presentations of all kinds. For example, 46% of those surveyed said they want more performances of plays and musicals where they live, compared to 30% who say they want more sports events.

The Decline of the Arts on Broadcast Television.

In the three years since the last survey, TV has not become a medium of expansion for the arts. Reported TV viewing of five out of eight types of arts presentations declined, apparently due to insufficient programming.

- The biggest declines in reported viewing were for plays, operas, and concerts by opera stars.
- Yet well over half the people in the survey said that if more arts programs were offered on TV, they would be likely to view them.

The Explosive Potential of VCRs. In an era of diminishing leisure time, videocassette recorders are clearly the most promising medium of growth for the arts. More than half of all American households now own VCRs (up from one in six four years ago), and the survey shows that these households are likely to buy or rent "first-rate" arts videocassettes. The strongest demand is for:

- hit musical comedies



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- hit plays running on Broadway or in London
  - pop concerts.

The data on people who say they would rent or buy such arts cassettes indicate a potential market of \$2 billion a year.

Pressure for Arts in the Schools. After a decade of budget cutbacks, most Americans want to reinstate the arts as an integral part of the school curriculum.

- A solid majority of those surveyed favor regular full-credit courses in everything from creative writing (84% support) to dance (55% support).
- Two out of three people put arts courses on a par in educational importance with English, math, science, and social studies.

The Individual Artist in America. The vast majority of those surveyed see artists as "deeply dedicated and determined people" (93%) who are "highly important to the life of the country" (84%). However, this admiration does not automatically translate into a willingness to pay more taxes to support them.

- Most Americans still oppose government assistance to individual artists, although the number opposed is declining.
- Seven out of ten still would rather see that backing come from corporations.

The Yearning for Live Art. Despite the dominance of television and VCRs, nine out of ten people feel that seeing something performed live on stage is "more meaningful and exciting" than seeing it on TV. An equally high proportion feel that the arts are a vital part of the life of a community.

The popularity of the arts seems to have been undersold. While nearly three out of four people say they enjoy arts activities themselves,

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fewer than one in three firmly believe that "most" other people share their pleasures. By contrast, seven in ten think "most" people enjoy sports, despite the fact that attendance at arts events is greater than at sports events.

Financing the Arts. Support for government arts funding has grown appreciably. And people seem willing to dig deep to back up their expressed wishes.

- Seven out of ten surveyed say they would pay an additional \$10 a year in taxes to support the arts. That compares with 66% in 1984 and 51% in 1975.
- Eight in ten Americans favor corporate funding for the arts, and individual contributions are on the rise.
- 34% of the people surveyed say they contributed to an arts organization within the last year, a marginal 1% increase over 1984.
- However, the median amount contributed was \$61.60, up substantially from \$48.50 in 1984.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SURVEY

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### THE DECLINE OF FREE TIME: Life's Leisure Lost

*Americans average 16.6 hours of leisure time a week, a drop of 8% in three years.*

The continual decline in leisure time, a decrease of 8% since 1984, poses a fundamental challenge to the arts in America. This study looked especially at the rise of families in which both spouses hold down jobs. In the harried '80s, working parents — mothers in particular — apparently spend most of their free time holding the household together: taking care of children, shopping, arranging meals. One result is that the arts compete with other leisure activities for a dwindling number of hours.

The study showed:

- A slightly shorter reported work week: a median of 46.8 hours in 1987, down from 47.3 in 1984. This appears to reverse an upward trend since 1973, when the median was 40.6 hours.
- A further reduction in leisure time to a median of 16.6 hours a week, despite the slightly shortened work week, down from 18.1 hours in 1984 to 26.2 hours in 1973. This shows that since 1973 the average American's leisure time has shrunk by 9.6 hours a week, or 37%.

The age group suffering most from this decline is the baby boom generation, those aged 30 to 49. Typically shouldering the pressures of

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growing children and both spouses working, these people report an average of only 14.6 leisure hours a week, down from 16.0 hours in 1984.

The study also uncovered significant changes in three other groups:

- Women:** In addition to their increased participation in the work force, women still bear the main responsibilities for child-rearing and upkeep of the home. As a result, their leisure time has dropped more than men's. Women report a median of 14.0 leisure hours a week, down from 15.6 hours in 1984. In contrast, men report 19.0 leisure hours, down from 20.3 hours in 1984.
- Hispanics:** Hispanics have a greater burden of life-sustaining activities than other groups. Hispanics report a drop to 13.0 hours of leisure a week from 18.0 in 1984.
- Blacks:** Blacks emerge as the one group that has increased leisure time—from 12.2 hours a week in 1984 to 15.0 hours. Even with this increase, however, Blacks still have less leisure time than the overall average.

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## IMPACT ON THE ARTS: Holding Their Own

*Reported attendance at arts events has declined 12% since 1984.*

With the drop in leisure time, it is not surprising that the number of people who say they attend arts events has fallen, the first decline in 15 years. Arts organizations must face the challenge of attracting a public with considerably less leisure time.

Attendance has gone down an average of 12% since 1984 indicating that new means of reaching audiences must be explored.

Though the arts in general have suffered a decline in attendance, the two exceptions to this trend are art museums and movies.

- Art museums: Although the percentage of adult Americans who say they visit art museums has dropped from 58% in 1984 to 55% currently, reflecting the arts' narrower base, those who visit do so more frequently — a median of 1.8 times a year, compared to 1.4 times in 1984. The net result suggests a healthy 24% increase in museum visits.
- Movies: Similarly, the number of adults who say they go to the movies declined from 78% in 1984 to 74%. However, the median frequency of attendance rose from 4.3 times in 1984 to 4.9 times in 1987, indicating a 9% increase in total attendance. It should be remembered that the prime audience for movies is young people under 18, who are not included in this survey.

Live performances of all kinds have been the losers:

- Live opera or musical theater: 27% of those surveyed (representing 47 million adults)

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now say they attend live performances of opera or musical theater, down substantially from 35% in 1984. At the same time, the median frequency of attendance they report has dropped from 2.0 to 1.6 performances a year. However, this audience has reported a loss of 3.7 hours a week of leisure time since 1984, more than those attending any other form of live cultural events.

- Live classical music: Live performances of classical music by orchestras, chamber groups, and soloists draw 31% of Americans, down from 34% in 1984. The median frequency of attendance has also dropped — from 2.5 performances a year in 1984 to 2.0 performances in the current survey. This suggests that classical music has suffered a significant loss of 26% in total attendance.
- Live popular music: Adult attendance at concerts given by pop singers, bands, and rock groups has fallen to 57% from 60% in 1984. Compounding the trend is a drop in the frequency of attendance, from a median of 3.0 performances per person in 1984 to 2.3 performances in 1987. This translates into a 26% decline, although again, it excludes the large number of people under 18 who go to such concerts.
- Live theater: Plays and other theatrical presentations now attract 65% of the American public, down from 67% in 1984. The average theatergoer now goes to only 2.6 performances a year, down from 3.4 in 1984. That adds up to a drop of 25% in theater attendance.
- Live performances of dance: The share of adult Americans attending ballet, modern, folk, or ethnic dance performances has held steady at 34%. But once again, those who attend do so less frequently — 1.9 times a

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year on average, compared to 2.2 times in 1984 — suggesting a net decline of 14% for dance audiences.

- Recorded classical music: The number of people who say they listen to classical music either on records or on the radio has declined, from 71% of the public in 1984 to 68% in 1987. However, the percentage of Americans who say they buy classical recordings has risen from 43% to 44%.
- Contemporary or avant-garde music: For the first time, *Americans and the Arts* measured the audience for contemporary or avant-
- Recorded classical music: The number of people who say they listen to classical music either on records or on the radio has declined, from 71% of the public in 1984 to 68% in 1987. However, the percentage of Americans who say they buy classical recordings has risen from 43% to 44%.
- Contemporary or avant-garde music: For the garde music concerts. The survey showed that 19% of all adults say they attended such performances in the year before the survey. The median number of performances attended was 2.2.

By any measure, the arts have had a real struggle since 1984. Pressures on budgets for the arts at all levels of government have constrained the supply of most arts presentations; the decrease in leisure time apparently has reduced the demand.

So far, one way the arts have managed to cope with America's loss of leisure time is by relying more heavily on frequent attenders, those who go to a specific type of arts presentation four or more times a year. Not surprisingly, these arts enthusiasts are people reporting more leisure time — 18.3 hours a week — than the average of 16.6 hours. While this has helped cushion the decline of overall arts attendance, it

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has made the audience base narrower and more precarious.

Harris's observation: While the arts have managed to hold their own, they have had to fight harder than ever for a share of Americans' dwindling free time. If leisure time goes down much further, arts attendance could continue to drop off as pressured individuals cut their leisure commitments even more. It is possible that attendance at performances and exhibitions is entering a period of absolute decline, and that the arts will be forced to look to new forms of distribution — possibly videocassettes — to expand.

## **INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION: Faring Better than Attendance**

*Participation in the arts has fallen by  
3%; spectatorship by 12%.*

For the first time since the original *Americans and the Arts* survey was conducted in 1973, the share of people who say they personally participate in arts activities such as painting or creative writing has fallen slightly: by 3% since the last survey. This decline is significantly smaller than the 12% drop in attendance and the 8% drop in leisure time, suggesting the high value Americans place on participatory arts activities.

- *Slowing*: Eight out of the 11 arts activities explored in the survey showed a marginal decline (3% or less) in the percentage of Americans who participate: needlepoint, weaving, and other handiwork — currently enjoyed by 41% of the public (72 million people); playing a musical instrument — 30% of the public, painting, drawing, and the graphic arts — 27%; writing stories or poems — 24%; folk or



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ethnic dance — 15%; making pottery or ceramics — 14%; sculpting or working with clay — 8%; working with a local theater group — 6%.

- *Steady*: 22% of adults (39 million) sing in a choir or other choral group, numbers unchanged since 1984.
- *Growing*: Two areas of personal participation in the arts — photography and dance — have grown explosively in the '70s and '80s, and show no signs of slowing down. A record 51% of American adults are involved in photography, up from 47% in 1984 and almost triple the 19% recorded in the 1975 survey. Twenty-three percent of all adults participate in ballet or modern dance, up from 21% in 1984 and a seven-fold increase since 1975, when only 3% were involved in dance.

The study revealed patterns among groups who participate in the arts. For example, whites participate more than Blacks and Hispanics in ceramics, photography, needlework, and playing a musical instrument. Blacks show greater participation in creative writing, ethnic dance, and choral singing. Hispanics, with the least leisure time, lead all groups in painting and graphic arts, sculpture, and working with local theater groups.

People who engage in creative writing and dance are concentrated in cities, and among the young (18- to 29-year-olds) and the highly educated. People involved in needlepoint, weaving, and other handiwork are more likely to be found in rural areas.

Clearly, while the surge in arts participation recorded from 1973 to 1984 has leveled off, the huge gains of the late '70s and early '80s are not easily erased; the arts have won a permanent place in the mainstream of American life.

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## **OBSTACLES TO ATTENDANCE: You Can't Get There from Here**

*Nearly two out of five Americans say they have no concert hall in their community.*

Over the years, *Americans and the Arts* has tried to determine what prevents people from attending more arts events than they do. While the forces eroding leisure time may be beyond the control of arts organizations, other barriers — such as a lack of arts facilities — are not. The main reasons people give for not attending arts performances are:

- "I don't have enough time." (33%)
- "Not very many performances are given in this area." (32%)
- "Ticket prices are too high." (29%)
- "It is too difficult to get from here to places where performances are given." (28%)
- "It is so difficult to find a parking place." (23%)
- "The costs of hiring a baby-sitter, eating out, and other costs are more than I can afford." (19%)

The reasons given for not attending museums closely parallel those for the performing arts. In both cases, the lack of arts facilities and presentations are key deterrents.

Indeed, the survey revealed a strong appetite for more local arts presentations. When questioned about eight different types of arts events, up to 60% said they feel a need for more of them in their area. By way of comparison, only 30% said they want more sports events where they live. The eight types:

- Children's theater performances: 60% of the American public say they want more children's theater where they live, up from 59%

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in 1984.

- Outdoor arts festivals: 50% of Americans want more of these, up one point over 1984.
- Painting and sculpture exhibitions: 49% want more, compared to 47% in the last survey.
- Plays and musicals: 46% say they want more plays, musicals, and other adult theater performances in their community, up one point since 1984.
- Ballet or modern dance: More performances are called for by 44%, up from 43% in 1984.
- Folk or ethnic dance: 43% would welcome more performances, up from 41%.
- Classical music concerts and recitals: 42% would like to see more of these, unchanged from the last survey.
- Popular music: 37% want more rock, country, and other popular music presentations, up from 34% in 1984.

For many Americans, the essential problem is a lack of cultural facilities in their community. Thirty-nine percent report that their community has no concert hall or opera house; 31% say there is no theater in their community where plays or musicals can be performed; 37% say they have no easy access to a museum with artistic, scientific, or historical exhibitions.

Given the added time pressures that American adults say they are facing, new facilities and more frequent presentations apparently could help the arts tap far more of their potential audience.

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## **NEW DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS: The Arts on Broadcast Television**

*If more arts programs were broadcast, 73%  
said they would be likely to watch them.*

The 1984 *Americans and the Arts* survey found that the number of people viewing arts performances on television rivaled the audience for live performances. With live audiences leveling off, might broadcast television be a medium through which the arts could expand? So far, apparently not. The current survey shows that five out of eight types of arts presentations reportedly are getting less television viewership than they were three years ago. But this seems to be due less to a lack of interest on the part of viewers than to a lack of enough arts programming to meet the demand.

When asked what types of cultural programs they had watched on television "during the past three months," those surveyed revealed these patterns:

- Movies: The share of people who say they watched at least one broadcast presentation of a top movie (defined as one that might be nominated for an Academy Award) dropped from 79% of the public in 1984 to 75%.
- Pop music: Those viewing at least one music concert by a leading rock or pop music group dropped from 59% to 54%.
- Plays: The percentage of the public that watched a play on television dropped

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sharply, from 57% in 1984 to 44% in 1987.

- Opera: The number of Americans who reported seeing an opera on TV declined from 23% to 20%; the number who said they viewed a concert by an opera star declined from 29% to 22%.

The following three types of performances increased their television viewership:

- Musical comedies: Up from 61% in 1984 to 62%.
- Ballet or modern dance: Up from 42% to 45%.
- Symphony orchestra concerts: From 36% in 1984 to 40%. This is the opposite of what has happened to live classical music attendance, suggesting some shift for this art form from the concert hall to TV. (Interest in classical recordings also increased.)

The survey suggests that by offering more arts programs, television could attract a broader audience. Fourteen percent of those polled said that if there were more such programs, they would "certainly" view them, and an additional 59% said they "probably" would. When asked what types of arts programs they would like to see more of on TV, the greatest number (40%) said they would like more top movies; the smallest number (7%) said they wanted more operas or concerts by opera stars.

Harris's observation: Television — with the exception of public TV and cable — may have underestimated the audience for arts programs. At a time when the major television networks are suffering a steady loss of viewers for their entertainment and sports shows, it may be sensible to reexamine the prospects for arts programming. In particular, live broadcasts, which only broadcast TV can provide, convey an electricity often lacking in taped performances.

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## **THE EXPLOSIVE POTENTIAL OF VCRs: A \$2-Billion Arts Market**

*77% of VCR owners say they would probably rent or buy tapes of musical comedies.*

There is little doubt that the fastest-growing medium of entertainment in America is the videocassette recorder. The share of households with VCRs jumped from 17% in 1984 to 55% in 1987. But that only begins to tell the story.

The frequency of renting or buying cassettes has skyrocketed, from a median of 5.8 per family in 1984 to 22.6 per family in 1987.

Videocassettes of all kinds were rented more than a billion times in the 12 months before the survey. With an average rental price estimated at \$1.99, the market for rented tapes is nearly \$2.6 billion annually. Nearly 104 million tapes were purchased in the same time period, at an average sale price of \$25, adding up to another \$2.6 billion.

The appeal of the VCR is two-fold: It allows viewers to tape programs off the air and watch them at their convenience, and it offers programs not available on TV. In both respects it disrupts traditional television watching (and programming) strategies. Forty-four percent of VCR owners (42 million adults) reported that they are "increasingly watching a movie or some other performance on a videocassette instead of watching regularly scheduled programs on TV." These are predominantly younger people — perhaps the wave of the future for TV and VCR usage.

The potential for arts videocassettes is strong:  
 Musicals: 77% of VCR owners (74 million

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people) said it is "certain" or "probable" that they would rent or buy first-rate videotaped performances of hit musical comedies and musical theater shows. Sixteen percent said they would be certain to buy such tapes.

- Plays: 63% of VCR owners said they would be in the market for cassettes of new hit plays on Broadway and in London. The "certain to buy" group represented 17%.
- Pop concerts: 58% said they would be likely to rent or buy video tapes of the best pop concerts just after they have taken place. The "certain to buy" subset was 15%, as it was for the following four kinds of programming:
  - Classical concerts: 45% of VCR owners were "probable" or "certain" to rent or buy cassettes of recent concerts by top symphony orchestras and top performing artists.
  - Dance: 39% were interested in videotaped performances by the world's top ballet and modern dance companies.
  - Art exhibitions: 38% said they would be in the market for videocassettes of important current art exhibitions.
  - Opera: 23% of VCR owners said they were inclined to rent or buy video tapes of top opera performances, such as those from La Scala.

All told, the results show a large potential market for performances on videocassette. A conservative assumption of 5.7 arts tapes bought or rented annually per interested VCR owner (compared to the median 22.6 cassettes of all types now bought or rented) could put the value of the total market for arts videocassettes somewhere in the vicinity of \$2 billion a year.

Harris's observation: Arts groups may want to watch this situation, taking care that a per-

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centage of such revenues goes to developing artists and institutions as well as to those who make up the arts establishment.

Compared to VCRs, cable TV seems to hold less promise for expansion of the arts. Fewer households subscribe to cable (53%, compared to 55% for VCRs), and more important, cable — up only 6% since 1984 — is growing at a slower rate.

Furthermore, according to Harris's other data, cable audiences tend to be less educated and less arts-oriented than VCR owners. With a few exceptions, like the Arts and Entertainment Network, cable services simply have not succeeded in reaching the heart of the arts market.

## **ARTS IN THE SCHOOLS: Educating the Educators**

*84% favor full-credit courses  
in creative writing.*

For more than a decade, the arts have been fighting a rear guard battle in the public school system. In school after school, arts programs have been put in jeopardy by budget cutbacks. Yet the study found that a solid majority of Americans want to keep the arts an integral part of the school curriculum.

- 91% believe that children in school should "be exposed to theater, music, dance, exhibitions of paintings and sculpture, and similar cultural events."
- 86% added that they would like their children to have cultural opportunities that they themselves did not have.
- 67% believe, moreover, that "in order to have well-rounded students turned out by the



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school system, it is just as important to have students learn as much about the arts as they do about English, foreign languages, math, science, and social studies.”

- 55% said they do not think schoolchildren in their community have had enough exposure to the arts.
- The share of people who believe that school budgets should finance regular, full-credit courses in the arts remained in the neighborhood of 75%. Some of the arts courses they support are creative writing (favored by 84%); playing a musical instrument (81%); drawing, painting, or sculpture (78%); music appreciation (76%); voice or singing (75%); and ballet, modern dance, or movement (55%).

The two subjects for which full-credit courses have gained the most support are:

- Art appreciation: favored by 74% of those surveyed, up from 69% in 1984.
- Photography or film-making: supported by 62%, up from 58% in 1984.

Harris's observation: The findings suggest a powerful mandate to treat the arts as an essential part of the school curriculum. Indeed, the arts are in such a strong position in public opinion at the moment that an all-out drive for fully integrating arts programs into the educational system could meet with real success.

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## CARING FOR INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS: Growing Support for Grants

*Two out of three favor grants to  
developing artists.*

In 1987, for the first time, *Americans and the Arts* explored what the American people think of artists, and what kind of support they are prepared to give them.

- 93% of those surveyed agree that artists "have to be deeply dedicated and determined people to survive as artists."
- 84% agree that artists are "highly important to the life of the country as the current and potential creators of the art and culture that the nation needs to be a full and rich place to live."
- 83% believe that artists "are often overlooked for long periods of time, even though they have real creative talents."
- 81% say that "more than others, artists reflect what life is really like in a given time, so what artists do is an important part of the history of a community or country."
- 68% feel that "in their work, artists capture a vision of the future that few others in other occupations achieve in their work."
- 66% agree that artists "work very hard for very little money."

At the same time, majorities reject many common negative descriptions of artists: Artists are people who "don't want to settle down to a normal job like most other people have to" (81% disagree); they "don't know how to give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay" (79%); most artists "are not very disciplined people" (65%), and they "tend to be hard people to

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work with and get along with" (51%).

Clearly, the American public values its professional artists and empathizes with the hard life they have chosen for themselves.

However, admiration does not automatically translate into willingness to help individual artists financially. This country has no strong tradition of backing individual artists, and most people still oppose government financial assistance for them. But the survey did show that this attitude is softening:

- 51% of Americans now say they oppose federal help for individual artists, compared to 58% in 1984.
- 51% oppose state government offering such assistance, down from 57% in 1984.
- 53% oppose local government assistance, down from 55%.

Private funding for artists proved to be a different matter:

- A 69% majority favor corporate financial assistance for artists, up from 49% in 1975 and from 63% in 1984.
- An even larger 89% majority would like to see financial help come from individual contributors. (This was the first time this question was included in the survey.)

People were informed that in Canada, France, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia, special funds are set up by the government and private donors to make grants to developing artists, to buy their works, and to provide professional training facilities. Those participating in the survey were then asked if there should be similar programs in the U.S. More than two out of three said yes.

Harris's observation: Public apathy about helping individual artists may simply be a matter of not knowing the options that are available.

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## LIVE ART: Hard to Live Without

*Nine out of ten find live performances more "meaningful and exciting" than televised ones.*

A majority of Americans are quite particular about the importance of live performances. A strong 90% feel that "to see something performed live on stage is more meaningful and exciting than watching it on TV."

The study also showed that:

- An even higher 93% believe that "museums are an important resource for the whole community because they tell us so much about the art and history of different cultures or about science and our environment."
- 93% also feel that museums and music performances "make a community a better place to live."
- 90% feel that "some means should be found to present more performances of music, theater, and dance in all parts of the country so that all Americans have an opportunity to attend."

This powerful conviction that the arts are a salutary element in the social fabric is buttressed by more personal feelings. Here is how people responded when asked what the arts "do for you":

- 74% say the arts "just give you pure pleasure to experience or to participate in."
- 73% feel that the arts offer them "a positive experience in a troubled world."
- 71% say that if no arts were available in their community, they would "personally miss" them.

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- 67% believe that the arts enable them to “find a source of creative expression and experience that is rare.”

The survey uncovered a curious phenomenon. As much as people enjoy the arts themselves, they apparently are more skeptical about the enjoyment of others. While nearly 75% say they personally enjoy arts activities, only 29% strongly agree that “most people” enjoy attending the arts, compared to 69% who strongly agree that “most people enjoy attending sports events.”

Harris’s observation: The arts, it seems, have been under-promoted and under-funded, with most people having to discover on their own how much of the public appreciates the arts.

## **FINANCING THE ARTS: A Willingness to Pay More**

*70% of Americans are willing to pay  
an additional \$10 a year in taxes  
to support the arts.*

Since 1980 many public officials have argued that the arts should not depend on the government for financial support. Perhaps because of this, according to Harris, the public increasingly perceives the arts as either self-supporting or predominantly financed by private contributions.

Here are the public’s perceptions of how the arts are funded:

- Self-supporting: The number of respondents who believe that ticket sales, membership fees, and other earned income are generally enough to support most arts organizations has modestly increased. For dance groups, the number has risen from 30% of the public
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in 1984 to 31% today; for opera companies, from 25% to 30%; for theater groups, from 27% to 29%; symphony orchestras, 24% to 28%; art museums, 9% to 14%.

- Privately supported: Even larger numbers believe that the arts depend primarily on private contributions. Fifty-one percent of those surveyed believe that theater groups generally rely on private support, up from 49% in 1984; opera companies — 47%, down from 48% in 1984; symphony orchestras — 46%, down from 47%; dance companies — 46%, up from 45%; and art museums — 44%, the same as in 1984.
- Government supported: Surprisingly small numbers believe that the arts generally rely on government funding. A mere 6% say that theater groups, opera companies, and symphony orchestras rely on such funding; 5% think dance troupes do, and 21% say art museums do. However, only 41% recognize that public tennis courts and golf courses depend on government financing, and 33% say hospitals do.

An increasing number of people are convinced that both the public and private sectors *ought* to help finance arts organizations:

- Government: In 1980, federal assistance to the arts was supported by only a narrow 50-46% plurality of those surveyed; in 1984, it was backed 55% to 40%. In the current survey, a solid 59-36% majority support federal funding. Similarly, the number of people supporting state government funding has risen from 60% in 1980 to 64% in 1984 to 67% today. Support for municipal and county funding has risen from 64% to 66%.
- Private Sector: Still more Americans believe that the private sector should help the arts. Eighty-two percent say they favor busi-

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nesses and corporations giving financial assistance to the arts, up from 77% in 1984. Eighty-three percent look to foundations, up from 81%. The one type of giving that has lost support is individual giving to the arts, with 79% saying they approve of it.

Harris's observation: This seems to reflect the growing feeling that individual contributions cannot do the job alone.

It is significant that the public's support for federal assistance to the arts has increased during a decade when the pressures to cut or eliminate such assistance have been enormous. However, one acid test is how much more people are willing to pay in taxes to finance the arts.

Participants in the survey were informed that each year the federal government pays out more than \$900 per capita for defense, \$140 for education, and no more than 75 cents for the arts. They were then asked how much more federal tax they would be willing to pay to support arts activities and facilities.

- \$25 more: In 1975, 41% of those surveyed said they would be willing to pay an additional \$25 in taxes to support the arts. That number has climbed, from 51% in 1980 and 53% in 1984, to 56%.
- \$10 more: The number of people in the survey willing to pay \$10 more in taxes has risen even more sharply, from 51% in 1975, past 65% in 1980 and 66% in 1984, to 70%.

Harris's observation: This growing support for government assistance has important implications for arts funding. Private giving increases when the government backs the arts, because private contributors tend to follow the government's lead in deciding what organizations are worth contributing to.

Since 1984, *Americans and the Arts* has examined trends in personal giving to the arts. The

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results shed light on the potential for individual contributions:

- Of those surveyed in 1987, 34% report that they contributed to the arts in the 12 months before the survey, up from 27% in 1984.
- When asked what arts organizations or funds they gave to, 23% mentioned art museums (down two percentage points from 1984), followed by 21% who say they contributed to a theater company (up two points), 11% to symphony orchestras (down one point), 10% to dance companies (up one point), 5% to opera companies (up one point), 3% to choral groups (unchanged), and only 1% to craft organizations (down two points). The number who report contributing to a united arts fund in the preceding 12 months rose sharply, from 2% of those surveyed in 1984 to 7%.
- When asked how much they had given, the median amount was \$61.60, a 27% per capita increase over the 1984 median of \$48.50. This is largely because more people are giving relatively large gifts: 29% of those surveyed contributed \$100 or more to the arts, up from 7% in 1984, and 7% report giving \$500 or more, up from 2%.

There is evidence that Americans might be willing to give even more to the arts if their help was solicited more diligently. In the current survey, 65% say that arts organizations solicited their contributions less frequently than other causes. The study also showed:

- 44% say they would contribute more to the arts if they were asked more often.
- Most people (66%) report that an effective form of solicitation is "a telephone call from someone you know and respect." This was followed by "an intimate gathering of a small group of friends who were also likely to give



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- to the same campaign" (57%).
- A large majority (68%) say they would like a matching grant arrangement in which their employer would contribute to the arts an amount equal to what they contribute themselves.

Clearly, Americans' willingness to support the arts echoes their view that the arts are an integral part of their lives.

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*A note on the survey:* This fifth survey of Americans and the arts was conducted among a cross-section of 1,501 men and women aged 18 and over, constituting a national sample. Participants were scientifically selected so that the factors of age, sex, race, education, income, community size, and region were proportionate to the entire adult population of the United States. Interviews were conducted by telephone from March 13 through April 6, 1987.

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