

D'Art report number 2

# International Comparisons of Arts Participation Data

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IFACCA is interested in hearing from anyone who cites this report.

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## Introduction

This reports summarises the outcome of IFACCA's second D'Art question, which was sent by Louise Doyle, Research Officer at the National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics (NCCRS) of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Ms Doyle asks:

### **Question**

The NCCRS seeks input on the availability of attendance data that could be compared to data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as part of its *Attendance at Culture and Leisure Venues* survey.

We would greatly appreciate any feedback from your network on websites or publications which provide details of similar types of surveys.

The context for this question is provided in Appendix 1.

We received six responses to this request (respondents are listed in Appendix 2). The NCCRS found the responses helpful and wishes to thank respondents for their interest and suggestions.

It is usually a condition of D'Art that the agency making the request also provides an analysis or 'executive summary' of responses. However, since the NCCRS intends to use the information for a more detailed analysis, this D'Art report aims primarily to be a source of references and links. That said, the report also contains a brief comment, produced by the IFACCA secretariat, to provide additional context. The comment sources producers of cultural statistics around the world, discusses international comparisons and highlights comparisons that already exist. The comment provides background to international comparisons of cultural statistics for anyone wishing to pursue the issues in greater detail.

## Comment

Inter-country comparisons are common in public policy. Comparisons can be used for benchmarking and for researching the impacts of alternative policy mechanisms. In cultural policy, a vigorous debate has surrounded the issue of inter-country comparisons: see in particular Schuster (1987 and 1989), Kawashima (1995), Gray (1996), Allin (2000) and Wiesand (2002).

A common thread in this debate has been the need for reliable data upon which to make cross-country comparisons.

### **International cultural statistics programs**

Cultural statistics entered the global realm in 1987 with the release of UNESCO's framework for cultural statistics, the first formal international classification of cultural statistics (UNESCO, 1986). UNESCO has gone on to publish cultural data from around the world in statistical appendices to its two world culture reports (UNESCO, 1998 and 2000), and has recently established an Institute for Statistics to further the organisation's development work on cultural statistics (<http://www.uis.unesco.org/>).

The work of UNESCO has been much-cited in the development work of cultural statistics programs (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1995; Appendix 2). In Canada and Australia, the government's primary statistical agencies established cultural statistics units, both of which have become international 'peak bodies' in the production and development of cultural statistics. A number of cultural statistics 'specialist' bodies now exist around the world. A selection of links are:

Australia: National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/c311215.nsf/20564c23f3183fdaca25672100813ef1/8086c7185b84f467ca256b260020f899!OpenDocument>

Canada: Statistics Canada  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/cultur.htm> and  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/search/browse-people.htm>.

Finland: Statistics Finland  
[http://www.stat.fi/tk/el/kva\\_kulttuuri\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/tk/el/kva_kulttuuri_en.html)

New Zealand: Statistics New Zealand  
[http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/web/Prod\\_Serv.nsf/htmldocs/Arts+and+Culture](http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/web/Prod_Serv.nsf/htmldocs/Arts+and+Culture)

Norway: Statistics Norway  
[http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/07/nos\\_cultural/cultural\\_statistics/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/07/nos_cultural/cultural_statistics/)

UK: Policy Studies Institute (UK)  
<http://www.psi.org.uk/publications/cultstud.htm>

Even if they do not have a specialist cultural statistics unit, most government statistical agencies generate some cultural statistics in their ongoing collections. For example, collections that generate GDP and employment data also invariably capture information on the cultural industries and cultural workers, and those data are often structured within closely aligned classification systems and gathered through similar survey vehicles. In the search for cultural statistics, it is worthwhile visiting the websites of such statistical agencies to determine what data are obtainable. Cultural statistics are, for example, available on-line for:

Bahrain <http://www.bahrain.gov.bh/english/stats/BFigures/97/Culture.asp>  
Croatia <http://www.dzs.hr/StatInfo/Kultura.htm>  
Germany [http://www.destatis.de/basis/be\\_ueber.htm](http://www.destatis.de/basis/be_ueber.htm)  
Japan <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/15e.htm>  
Mexico <http://www.inegi.gob.mx/estadistica/ingles/sociodem/fisociodemografia.html>  
Palestinian Territories <http://www.pcbs.org/inside/selcts.htm>  
Turkey <http://www.die.gov.tr/ENGLISH/ISTATIS/ESG2/f.htm>

A comprehensive list of such agencies can be explored through the United Nations web page <http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/gsnatstat.htm>.

### Comparing cultural data

A familiar ‘catch-cry’ of cultural policy analysis is the lack of cultural data *within* countries, let alone data that might allow comparisons *between* countries. The first priority of development work of cultural statistics programs has been, therefore, to improve cultural statistics domestically. A significant element of this development work has been the setting of national standards for cultural statistics, especially the encouraging of standardisation in the definitions, classifications and frameworks used for cultural data. But domestic standardisation has only emphasised the possibilities and benefits of international standardisation. Some agencies are therefore looking toward developing internationally comparative cultural data; this is one objective of the NCCRS in Australia, is a major aim of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and has been the focus of the European Union’s Eurostat committee (<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/>).

Cultural statistics are thus internationalising. Schuster (2002; 21) notes that, for a number of cultural statistics (including arts participation),

‘methodology has become sufficiently refined over time and sufficiently similar across countries that, for the first time, it has become possible to envision truly cross-national comparative studies’.

Comparisons of government expenditure on culture and the arts are particularly prevalent (Arts Council of England, 1998; Arts Council of Ireland, 2000; National Endowment for the Arts, 2000). But comparisons of survey-generated data are also becoming more common in the cultural policy literature. Participation data have been the subject of a number of comparisons.

### Participation data

Participation surveys are, in many ways, the flag-bearers of arts statistics. They measure activities that are not captured in other ongoing surveys such as labour force surveys and censuses. They are able to shed light on ‘informal’ as well as ‘formal’ arts activities. Their broad inclusiveness is attuned to the needs of arts policy analysis.

The relevance and popularity of participation surveys prompted RAND to undertake a thorough investigation and review of arts participation studies (see the McCarthy et al papers in the bibliography). Although the focus of these reports is largely on USA participation studies, the analyses and findings relate to all participation surveys. The RAND investigations highlight a number of drawbacks and inadequacies of usual participation methodologies. Suggestions are made for improving the relevance of participation research to the needs of arts policymakers and arts managers. Some of the inadequacies noted by RAND have been identified elsewhere and are already being addressed in surveys.

Despite their drawbacks, the pertinence of participation data to cultural policy has ensured that participation surveys are becoming increasingly common. New Zealand’s first arts participation survey was carried out as recently as 1999 (Creative New Zealand, 1999), while the Arts Council of England has just completed piloting the first major participation survey in England for 10 years (Jermyn et al, 2001).

New surveys are augmenting long-running survey programs such as that run by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the USA, which now has participation data for 1982, 1985, 1992 and 1997 (National Endowment for the Arts, 1997; Appendix A and B). The French Ministry of Culture and Communication can now compare participation at four points across more than twenty years (survey years being 1973, 1981, 1989 and 1997; see Donnat, 1999).

There is therefore a substantial and ever-growing stock of data on which to make international comparisons of arts participation.

The difficulty in using this stock of data to make comparisons is, of course, that no two participation surveys are exactly the same. Surveys have different reference periods, different sample populations (eg adults or children), different survey formats (eg phone interviews or face-to-face interviews) and different wordings for similar questions. The ability to compare data between surveys can be rendered impossible by the slightest methodological difference.

In the case of arts participation surveys, differences in methodological details are further compounded by broader differences in definitions and concepts. For example, the request from the NCCRS is for sources of attendance data, which is just one of two main ways of participating in art. The usual distinction in arts analysis is between attending art ('spectating') and doing art (or 'creating'). Creating is the involvement in making or generating artistic expression (eg writing, painting, singing, acting), while spectating is viewing, reading or listening to someone else's artistic creation. In 'mapping' cultural participation, Eurostat even proposes a third type of participation, called 'interaction' (Eurostat, 2002). Some surveys attempt to measure all forms of participation (as usual in time-use surveys); others measure different types of participation - the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), for example, gathers attendance and creation data in separate collections (see the ABS catalogues no. 4114.0 and no. 6281.0 in the bibliography).

To add to these broad-level differences, surveys also often concentrate on specific cultural domains (eg visual arts, music, dance).

More detailed discussions of the various ways that participation data are gathered can be found in McCarthy, Ondaatje and Zakaras (2001) and Bridgwood and Skelton (2001).

International data comparisons are always fraught with difficulty: different countries have different institutional and policy environments that impact data in ways that cannot be accounted for. The variety of participation survey frameworks and methodologies outlined above simply add to an already difficult task.

### **Comparing participation**

This D'Art question unearthed seven cross-country comparisons of cultural participation data. The studies are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: International Comparisons of Participation Data**

Reference	Participation statistic	Countries
Fisher and Wiesand (1991)	Various	Various European
Kirchberg (1994)	Attendance at both 'high' and popular' performing arts, visual arts and entertainment	Germany (Hamburg), USA (Baltimore)
Clancy et al (1994)	Attendance at arts events	Finland, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales
Schuster (1995)	Attendance at art exhibitions/ art galleries/museums etc.	Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Québec, Spain, Sweden, USA (some data on Ireland, Germany, Austria)
Clancy (1997)	Attendance at arts events	Finland, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales
Feist (1998)	Arts attendance and arts creation	Germany, UK, USA
Bridgwood and Skelton (2000)	Arts attendance	Canada, UK, USA

**Caveat**

The analyses set out in Table 1 make compelling reading. But, despite advances in survey methodology and data availability, using comparisons to draw conclusions or to make policy and program recommendations is still ill-advised. Not only do data come from countries with often very different institutional and policy environments, they are also generated using different survey instruments. Although the authors cited in Table 1 take pains to highlight the differences, caveats are typically buried within the text, while data remain boldly tabulated side-by-side. Differences underlying the data are thus obscured, and too often conclusions are drawn from incomparable data.

The comparison being undertaken by the NCCRS will shed light on the ability for arts policy analysts to make inter-country comparisons from arts participation data. The Centre has already undertaken an international comparison of sports participation data, in which it concludes that:

‘what we cannot determine from the available information is the proportion of the observed differences that are due to ... ‘real’ differences [in the ‘sportiness’ of the residents of various countries] rather than due to differences in survey methodology, scope, wording of questions, reference year and so on.’ (ABS, 2001; 3).

Despite recent advances in cultural statistics, it is unlikely that arts participation data will prove any more comparable than sports participation data.

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# Appendix 1

## Context for D'Art question 2

The NCCRS is currently undertaking a project to compare data for attendance at selected cultural venues and activities for Australia with similar data for other countries. It seeks input on the availability of attendance data, particularly for the UK and New Zealand, which could be compared to data collected by the ABS as part of its *Attendance at culture and leisure venues* survey. The survey has been conducted in 1991, 1995 and 1999 so any overseas surveys that correspond with one of these years would be ideal (although not essential).

The survey, undertaken in April 1999 and conducted as a supplement to the ABS' Monthly Labour Force Survey, focused on the following cultural venues/activities:

- art gallery
- museum
- animal/marine park
- botanic gardens
- library
- popular music
- classical music
- theatre
- dance
- opera/musical
- cinema

The survey had a sample of 26,000 and collected data via telephone from one randomly selected person within each responding household.

The NCCRS would greatly appreciate any feedback on websites or publications which provide details of similar types of surveys. To enable valid comparison to be undertaken, it is important that details of the methodology used to collect the data are made clear.

## Appendix 2

### Respondents

Responses to this D'Art question were received from:

- Ann Bridgwood, Director of Research, Arts Council of England.
- Mary Donn, Researcher, Creative New Zealand.
- Tom Bradshaw, Director of Research, National Endowment for the Arts, USA.
- Pennie Ojeda, International Coordinator, National Endowment for the Arts, USA.
- J. Mark Schuster, Professor of Urban Cultural Policy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA.
- Kate Smith, The British Council, UK.
- Aleksandra Uzelac, Culturelink Network, [www.culturelink.org](http://www.culturelink.org), Croatia.

Thanks to all respondents!