

HOUSTON ARTS SURVEY: PARTICIPATION, PERCEPTIONS & PROSPECTS



Kinder Institute releases the first-ever Houston Arts Survey

Study reveals area residents' experiences with and attitudes toward the arts and arts education

Houston's ability to position itself for prosperity in the 21st century will be determined by its success in nurturing a far more educated workforce, improving its overall quality of life, and capitalizing on the region's burgeoning ethnic and cultural diversity. With regard to all three of these new realities, the vitality, quality and visibility of the arts will have much to do with Houston's success in the years ahead.

Between November 2011 and January 2012, 1,200 scientifically-selected Harris County adults were asked about their free-time activities, their reasons for attending or not attending arts events, their personal involvement in creative activities, their support for arts education and the importance they attach to the arts for the city's overall quality of life. The study was funded by Houston Endowment Inc. and greatly aided by an advisory panel of leading national and local arts experts.

This new research documents the surprising extent to which Harris County residents participate in and support the arts. They are more likely than Americans in general to attend live arts performances. Ethnic background is unrelated to attendance rates: African Americans, Latinos and Asians are just as likely as Anglos to report that they attended a live performance in the arts during the preceding 12 months. The most important attendance predictors across all ethnic groups are education, household income and exposure to the arts in childhood.

More than a third of the survey respondents said they were currently participating in the arts and other creative activities, such as performing, painting, writing, or filmmaking. Sixty percent said they had been involved in the arts as children, with 37 percent saying that their childhood involvement lasted more than two years. "The survey confirms that early exposure to the arts is a major predictor of later participation and support for the arts," Klineberg said. "We know that this kind of education contributes importantly not only to a lifelong interest in the arts, but also to strengthening children's overall cognitive development and to improving educational outcomes in general."

The survey documents Houstonians' strong and pervasive commitment to strengthening the local arts community. Across a variety of questions, area residents are clear in their belief that the arts are important to Houston, that the availability and excellence of the arts are an essential component of the quality of life in the community, and that arts instruction should be part of every child's education.

In summary, the survey participants were asked what they would choose if Houston could have either great sports teams and stadiums or excellent music and theater. By 56 to 35 percent they said they would give priority to the arts over sports.

This first-ever survey of area residents' experience with and attitudes toward the arts has documented an unexpected depth and pervasiveness in the public's appreciation and support for the arts in the Houston area. "Given the significant role the arts will play in this city's efforts to address its educational, quality-of-life and demographic challenges, these findings bode well for the future of our region," Klineberg said.

For more information about the Houston Arts Survey, please visit <http://kinder.rice.edu/she/>.

The Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University advances understanding of the most critical issues facing Houston and other leading urban centers. The institute conducts scientific research, supports educational programs, and engages in public outreach with the goal of fostering more humane and sustainable cities.

The institute is a permanent home for the Kinder Houston Area Survey and the expansion of the survey into cross-national comparison studies. The institute's programs focus on areas such as race and inter-group relationships, urban health, and resiliency. The programs, research and outreach are designed to further ongoing research initiatives at Rice University and to serve as catalysts to stimulate informed decision-making and action in the Houston area and beyond.



Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University
6100 Main St. - MS 208
Houston, Texas 77005
713-348-4132
kinder@rice.edu
www.kinder.rice.edu