

Arts and Culture in Southeastern Wisconsin: The Public Speaks

A Report Commissioned by the
Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
(www.helenbaderinstitute.uwm.edu)

By

Stephen L. Percy
and
Stephen W. Moore

Center for Urban Initiatives and Research
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
(www.uwm.edu/Dept/CUIR)

February 2005



Arts and Culture in Southeastern Wisconsin: The Public Speaks

Executive Summary

In 2004, the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) commissioned the UWM Center for Urban Initiatives and Research to conduct a study of the nonprofit arts and culture sector in Southeastern Wisconsin.

The data for this study were gathered through telephone interviews with 473 randomly selected respondents located in the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin region, including the four counties of metropolitan Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha) plus Racine, Kenosha and Walworth Counties. The margin of error for this size sample is +/- 4.5%. Telephone interviews were conducted during fall of 2004.

Key highlights of the research findings include the following:

- **Attendance at Arts and Culture Events:** Survey results provide extensive data on attendance at a variety of arts and culture events, including live music events (Table 1), theater performances (Table 2), dance performances (Table 3), regional arts and culture events (Table 4), holiday arts performances (Table 5), and arts and crafts fairs (Table 6).
- **Impediments to Attending Arts Performances:** Factors that have deterred residents of the region from attending arts and culture events at least once include: cost, concerns about parking, insufficient understanding of the performance, safety concerns, and feeling uncomfortable in the setting (Table 10).
- **Awareness of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Offerings in Southeastern Wisconsin:** 13% very informed, 45% somewhat informed, 41% not very informed or not informed at all (Table 11).
- **Interest in Learning More about Arts and Culture Activities:** 47% of respondents are interested in learning more about arts and culture programs.
- **Value and Benefits of Arts to Children:**
 - 81% of respondents say that the arts and culture have a positive impact on the education and overall development of children.
 - 95% of parents and guardians whose children participated in the arts say that the arts had a moderate or strong impact on their children's overall development.
- **Perceived Benefits of Lively Arts and Culture Sector:**
 - 92% said it strengthens the social and economic vitality of downtown Milwaukee and the greater Milwaukee area
 - 87% said it attracts tourists from outside greater Milwaukee to the area
 - 85% said it makes the greater Milwaukee area an attractive place for individuals and families to make their homes
 - 83% said it makes Milwaukee an attractive place for businesses to set up operations
 - 71% said it contributes to the growth of new condominiums and apartments in downtown Milwaukee and adjacent areas (Table 15)
- **Support for Arts and Culture:** 22% of respondents said that they or a household member had given a charitable contribution to one or more local nonprofit arts and culture organizations in the past two years; 9% donated time or effort to aid such organizations.
- **Views on Policies to Support and Administer Arts (Milwaukee County Resident Only)**
43% favor paying more property tax to fund arts and culture organizations in Milwaukee County
41% favor a dedicated sales tax to support arts and culture in Milwaukee County
23% favor a new governing authority for arts, culture and recreation in Milwaukee County (Tables 19-22).

Arts and Culture in Southeastern Wisconsin: The Public Speaks

By

Stephen L. Percy
and
Stephen W. Moore

Center for Urban Initiatives and Research
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Background

As part of its mission to explore the nonprofit sector in greater Milwaukee and the state, the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) commissioned a study of the nonprofit arts and culture sector in Southeastern Wisconsin. The study was conducted by the UWM Center for Urban Initiatives and Research in consultation with leaders in the local arts community. The purpose of this study is to gauge the level of involvement and participation in arts and culture activities by residents of Southeastern Wisconsin. The study also explores public perceptions about the value of arts and culture and perspectives on proposals to provide financial support for arts and culture programs.

Methodology

The target area for the study is the Southeastern Wisconsin region that includes the four-county Milwaukee Metropolitan Area (Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties) plus Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth counties.

To gather public perspectives on the arts and culture in the region, the study conducted a telephone survey during the fall of 2004 using a random digit dialing process. The survey gathered information from 473 respondents, providing a margin of error of $\pm 4.5\%$.¹

¹ The proportion of respondents from each county is highly congruent with the proportion of each county's population to the seven-county region according to the 2000 census.

Attending Arts and Culture Events

Telephone survey respondents were queried about their attendance at a variety of arts and culture venues in the region in the past two years. Table 1 presents reported attendance for *live music performances*. The most frequently attended live music venues were Jazz in the Park, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and Off Broadway Shows at Vogel Hall.

Table 1

Live Music Performances

Respondents who attended *live music performances* in past two years.

Jazz in the Park	22%	Florentine Opera	6%
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra	20%	Milwaukee Chamber Orchestra	5%
Off Broadway Shows at Vogel Hall	18%	Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra	4%
Broadway Shows at the Milwaukee Theater	11%	Bel Canto Chorus	3%
Skylight Opera	6%	Present Music	1%
None of the above		57%	

Respondents were next asked about attendance at *theater performances*. Respondents reported most frequently attending the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and First Stage Children's Theater (see Table 2).

Table 2

Theater Performances

Respondents who attended *theater performances* in past two years.

Milwaukee Repertory Theater	22%
First Stage Children's Theater	10%
Milwaukee Public Theater	5%
Next Act Theater	5%
Renaissance Theaterworks	3%
Chamber Theater	3%
Theatre X	2%
Bialystock & Bloom	2%
None of the Above	68%

With regard to *dance performances*, the Milwaukee Ballet and Ko-Thi Dance Company were most frequently attended (see Table 3).

Table 3
Dance Performances

Respondents who attended *dance performances* in the past two years.

Milwaukee Ballet	14%
Ko-thi Dance Company	5%
Danceworks Performance Company	1%
Wild Space Dance Company	1%
None of the Above	82%

Next, respondents were asked about their attendance in the past year or two at *other arts and culture venues*, including museums and art festivals. For these activities, the Milwaukee County Zoo was the most frequently attended venue, followed by exhibits at the Milwaukee Public Museum, the IMAX Theater, and exhibits at the Milwaukee Art Museum (see Table 4).

Table 4
Other Art and Culture Venues

Respondents who attended *other art and culture venues* the past two years.

Milwaukee County Zoo	69%
Exhibits at the Milwaukee Public Museum	53%
IMAX Theater	49%
Exhibits at the Milwaukee Art Museum	48%
Pabst Theater	31%
Discovery World Museum	29%
Lakefront Festival of the Arts	24%
Performance or Concert at the Riverside Theater	20%
Racine Zoo	17%
Charles Allis or Villa Terrace Art Museums	12%
Racine Art Museum	11%
Kenosha Public Museum	10%
None of the Above	9%

Further analysis of the attendance data used for tables 1 through 4 revealed that in the previous two years 79% of respondents had attended 3 or more of the venues, 16% had attended 1 or 2 of the venues, and only 5% of respondents had not

attended any of the live music, theater, dance, or "other" venues.

Table 5 presents data on attendance at another form of art and culture program, holiday programs. The Milwaukee Ballet's *Nutcracker* and the Milwaukee Rep's production of *A Christmas Carol* were the most frequently attended events as reported in telephone interviews.

Table 5
Holiday Art and Culture Activities

Households that attended *holiday arts activities* during the past two 2 holiday seasons.

Milwaukee Ballet's Nutcracker	26%
Milwaukee Rep's Christmas Carol	22%
Holiday Folk Fair	15%
Milwaukee Theater Rockettes	10%
Other Events	8%
Milwaukee Symphony's Handel's Messiah	5%

When asked about attendance at local arts and crafts fairs, 51% of the respondents said that they had attended a fair in the past year or two (Table 6). Many respondents reported attending several of these events.

Table 6
Arts and Crafts Fairs

Respondents who attended *area arts and crafts fairs* in the previous two years.

Yes	51%
No	49%

Attendance at Arts and Culture Events in Other Cities

Some residents of Southeastern Wisconsin attend arts and culture programs in communities *other than Milwaukee*. When asked about attending events in other cities, 34% of respondents indicated that they had gone to Chicago to attend some form of art or culture activity in the past year or two. Table 7 shows the venues they attended. The most frequently visited programs were the Art Institute, a play or theater performance, or a visiting Broadway musical.

Table 7

Chicago Art and Culture Events

Attendance at art and culture events in Chicago in the past year or two.

Art Institute	29%	Museum of Science and Industry	12%
Play or Theater Production	22%	Shedd Aquarium	7%
Broadway Musical	19%	Non-Symphony Concert	7%
Unspecified Museum	17%	Symphony Concert	5%
Field Museum	13%	Art Fairs/ Galleries	4%

Note: The totals exceed 100% because respondents were allowed to indicate multiple activities.

In addition to Chicago, 20% of respondents attended events in other U.S. cities in the past 2 years, including some cities in Wisconsin. Of those 20% of respondents who attended events in cities other than Chicago or Milwaukee, 38% attended programs in other Wisconsin communities, 23% attended venues in New York City, and much smaller numbers attended arts and culture events in Las Vegas, the Twin Cities, Washington DC, San Francisco, Memphis, St. Louis, London, and Boston. In Wisconsin, in-state communities visited by Southeastern Wisconsin residents for arts and culture activities include Fort Atkinson, Green Bay, Madison, Spring Green, Cedarburg, West Bend, Racine, Whitewater and Waukesha.

Attendance at Entertainment Events in Southeastern Wisconsin

Respondents were asked about how often they had attended major entertainment events in Southeastern Wisconsin during the previous two years. Milwaukee Brewers baseball games, the annual State Fair, Ethnic festivals (as a group), and Summerfest were all attended by more than half of respondents (Table 9).

Table 9

Entertainment Events

Household attendance at other entertainment events in the past two years.

	% Yes	Average # of Times Attended
Brewers Game	57%	2.2
State Fair	55%	1.1
Ethnic Festivals	54%	1.5
Summerfest	52%	1.6
Rock or Jazz Concert at the Bradley Center or Marcus Amphitheater	45%	1.6
Bucks Game	38%	1.6
Potawatomi Casino	35%	2.1
Comedy Performance	30%	1.0
Event at Midwest Airlines Center	24%	0.4
Event at US Cellular Arena	19%	0.4

Impediments to Attending Arts and Culture Events

To gain further understanding of attendance patterns at arts and culture events, respondents were asked about whether any of a set of identified factors *ever* discouraged them from attending an arts program or event. Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being discouraged, at least once, from attending an arts or culture event based upon cost, including price of events or limited income inhibiting ability to purchase entry. Twenty-nine percent reported parking concerns as inhibiting attendance, and 14% said that unfamiliarity with the types of performance discouraged their attendance. Eleven percent of respondents identified concerns about safety, with respondents living closer to the downtown area being far less concerned about safety than suburban residents.² Finally 8% of respondents said that being uncomfortable in arts and culture settings discouraged attendance (Table 10).

²Those "living closer to downtown" were defined as residents of the following zip codes, including portions of Milwaukee, West Milwaukee, Shorewood, and Whitefish Bay: 53202, 53203, 53204, 53205, 53206, 53207, 53208, 53210, 53211, 53212, 53215, 53216, and 53233.

Table 10
Impediments

Impediments to arts and culture attendance.

Cost of Performance	40%
Parking Concerns	29%
Not Understanding Much About the Type of Performance	14%
Safety Concerns	11%
Feeling Uncomfortable in the Setting	8%

Awareness of Nonprofit Arts and Culture offerings in Southeastern Wisconsin

Respondents were asked to rate their level of awareness regarding the range of art and culture activities produced by nonprofit organizations in Southeastern Wisconsin. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either very informed or somewhat informed, while 41% had little or no awareness (Table 11).

Table 11

Awareness of Arts and Culture

Awareness of nonprofit arts and culture activities in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Very Informed	13%
Somewhat Informed	46%
Not Very Informed	28%
Not Informed At All	13%

Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they would like to learn more about arts and culture events in Southeastern Wisconsin. Table 12 shows how these respondents would like to receive information about these events.

Table 12

Preference for Ways to Learn More

How respondents would like to learn more about art and culture offerings.

Mailings	52%	E-mails	23%
Newspaper Ads	35%	Newsletters	21%
TV Ads	31%	TV Features	20%
Newspaper Features	29%	Websites	20%
Radio Advertising	27%	Radio Features	17%

Note: The totals exceed 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple items.

Interest Level in Nonprofit Arts and Culture Offerings in their Community

Respondents were asked to rank how interested they were in having several types of arts and culture activities available *in their communities*. Responses were measured on a 5-point scale with 1 being “not very interested” and 5 being “very interested.” Responses show that all of the categories of arts and culture, except for Opera, have an average interest level greater than 3, the middle of the scale (Table 13). Relatively higher levels of interest were registered for theater, Broadway shows, and visual arts.

Table 13

Interest in Art Activities

Interest level in having art and culture programs in their community.

	Average Level of Interest (5 is highest level)
Theater	4.06
Broadway Show	3.71
Visual Arts	3.59
Orchestras	3.36
Symphony Orchestra	3.31
Ballet-Dance	3.18
Opera	2.32

Value and Benefit of an Active Arts and Culture Sector for Communities

Survey respondents were asked, in an open-ended question, to identify what they saw as the benefits communities in general received from having a lively arts and culture sector. Respondents replied with an array of perceived benefits. Broadening cultural diversity and horizons was mentioned about a third of the time, while being good for everyone in general was mentioned one-quarter of the time (Table 14).

Table 14

Perceived Benefits of Art and Culture

Benefits from having a lively arts and culture sector; open-ended responses.

Broaden Cultural Diversity & Horizons	32%	Improved Level of Culture	7%
Good For Everyone	25%	Desirable Place to Live	6%
Entertainment	20%	Something to Do	4%
Economic Vitality	13%	TV Alternative	4%
Benefits Children	12%	Fosters Creativity	3%
Community Cohesion	10%	Family Cohesion	2%
Tourism	8%	Other	2%

Note: The totals exceed 100% because respondents were allowed to indicate multiple benefits.

Respondents were next asked about the impact of a lively arts and culture sector on multiple community conditions. A full 92% said an active arts and culture sector strengthens the overall social and economic vitality of downtown Milwaukee and the Greater Milwaukee Area. Eighty-seven percent said that arts and culture attracts tourists from outside the area, and 85% said that it makes Greater Milwaukee an attractive place for individuals and families from outside the area to make their homes. Eighty-three percent said an active arts and culture sector makes Milwaukee an attractive place for businesses to setup operations. And, finally, 71% said arts and culture contribute to housing development in downtown Milwaukee and adjacent areas.

Table 15

Given Benefits of Art and Culture

Percentage of respondents who stated that a lively arts and culture sector provides the following benefits

Strengthens the Social and Economic Vitality of Downtown Milwaukee and the Greater Milwaukee Area	92%
Attracts Tourists from Outside the Greater Milwaukee Area	87%
Makes the Greater Milwaukee Area an Attractive Place for Individuals and Families to Make Their New Home	85%
Makes Milwaukee an Attractive Place for Businesses to Set Up Operations	83%
Contributes to the Growth of New Condominiums and Apartments in Downtown Milwaukee and Adjacent Areas	71%

Respondents were asked multiple questions about *the impact of arts and culture on children*. They were asked how important they thought it was for children to be exposed to arts and culture as a component of their overall education and development. Over 80% feel that it is very important that children be exposed to art and culture as part of childhood education and development (Table 16).

Table 16

Value of the Arts for Children

Importance of exposing children to art and culture as part of education and development

Very	81%
Somewhat	18%
Not Very	<1%
Not At All	<1%

A subsequent question was directed to respondents who are parents or guardians of one or more children under the age of 18. Of these, 57% said that their children participated in arts programs in local schools, and 28% said their children participated in arts outside of school, including work with private tutors and nonprofit arts organizations. Practically all (95%) of parents and guardians whose children had participated in the arts in school said that the arts have a moderate or strong impact on their children's overall development.

Donations and Volunteering

Twenty-two percent of respondents said that someone in their household had given a monetary donation (other than the price of admission) to a nonprofit arts or culture organization in Southeastern Wisconsin during 2003 or 2004. This level of giving is close to the 28% level found in five other communities studied by the Urban Institute in 1998.³ The average amount given was \$310 over the two years, with \$100 being the most common amount. Nine percent of respondents said that a member of their household had given time or effort to a nonprofit arts and culture organization during 2003 or 2004, compared with 10% in the

³ From 1998 Urban Institute Cultural Participation Survey cited in Chris Walker, Cory Fleming and Kay Sherwood, *Building Arts Participation: New Findings from The Field* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2003). P. 10.

Urban Institute Study.⁴ The average amount of time volunteered was 63 hours over two years. Nineteen percent of respondents wanted to learn more about volunteer opportunities with nonprofit arts and culture organizations.

Supporting the Arts and Culture in Southeastern Wisconsin

Respondents were asked several questions about possible policy mechanisms to help fund or administer arts and culture in Milwaukee County and Southeastern Wisconsin. First, respondents were asked to rate the impact of arts and culture programs supported by Milwaukee County—including the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts and the Milwaukee Art Museum—on the life quality of their family. Impact was measured on a 5-point scale with 1 representing “no impact” and 5 being “high impact.” Table 17 presents responses for all residents as well as for residents arranged by residence in Milwaukee County or any other of the other six counties in Southeast Wisconsin. The average level of impact was about the same for both, about 3.5 on the five-point scale.

Table 17

Impact of Art and Culture

Impact of Milwaukee County-supported arts and culture on the lives of area residents.

	Average Level of Impact (5 is highest level)
Milwaukee County	3.6
All Other Counties	3.4
All Respondents	3.5

Respondents were also asked if they thought it was fair for Milwaukee County to charge people who lived outside of Milwaukee County a higher price for admission to its supported arts and culture programs, such as the Milwaukee County Zoo and the Milwaukee Public Museum. Table 18 shows that a majority of respondents in Milwaukee County felt differential admission pricing was fair, while a majority of respondents from the other 6 counties felt that it was unfair. Nonetheless, about a third of those living outside of Milwaukee County thought it was fair for them

⁴Ibid, p. 10.

to be charged a higher admission to arts and culture programs supported by Milwaukee County government.

Table 18

Fairness of Charging Different Admission

Fairness of differential admission pricing.

	Milwaukee County	All Other Counties	All Respondents
Unfair	37%	61%	49%
Fair	53%	34%	43%
Don't Know	10%	5%	8%

Respondents *who lived in Milwaukee County* alone were asked several more questions about possible mechanisms for public support for and administration of arts and culture in Milwaukee County. The first question asked the Milwaukee County respondents if they were willing to pay more property taxes in order to support art, culture, and museums in Milwaukee County. Forty-three percent were in favor, 38% were opposed, and 19% had no opinion (Table 19).

Table 19

Support for Increased Property Tax for Arts and Culture

Milwaukee County respondents willing to pay more in property taxes to support arts, culture, and museums in the Milwaukee County.

Favor	43%
Oppose	38%
No Opinion	19%

Note: This question was asked of Milwaukee County residents only.

Next Milwaukee County residents were told of a recent task force report that recommended that the state enable county governments to levy a dedicated sales tax (up to ½ percent) to fund parks, art, museums, and culture programs. The authors of the report concluded that a sales tax was the best mechanism to fund parks, art, museums, and culture programs because of the large amount of attendees from outside the county. A sales tax would spread the tax burden out to tourists and shoppers from outside the county without reducing retail sales in Milwaukee County.⁵ Respondents were asked

⁵ Final Report of the Milwaukee County Parks, Recreation and Culture Funding Task Force, county Supervisor Daniel J. Diliberti, Task Force Chair, June 9, 2003 (pp. 25-27).

two questions about this plan. First they were asked their opinion about a dedicated sales tax to support *parks* in Milwaukee County. Forty-seven percent were in favor, 28% were opposed and a quarter had no opinion. Second, Milwaukee County residents were asked if they support a dedicated sales tax to support *arts, culture, and museums* in Milwaukee County. Here, 41% were in favor, 36% opposed it, and a quarter had no opinion (Table 21).

Table 20

Support for Dedicated Sales Tax for Parks

Support among Milwaukee County residents for a dedicated county sales tax to support the county park system.

Favor	47%
Oppose	28%
No Opinion	25%

Note: This question was asked of Milwaukee County residents only.

Table 21

Support for Dedicated Arts and Culture Sales Tax

Support among Milwaukee County residents for a dedicated county sales tax to support arts and culture in Milwaukee County.

Favor	41%
Oppose	34%
No Opinion	25%

Note: This question was asked of Milwaukee County residents only.

Finally, Milwaukee County residents were asked if they supported the creation of a “separate governing body” to fund and manage arts, culture, parks, and recreation in Milwaukee County (an idea identified in the 2003 Task Force Report on Milwaukee County Parks, Recreation, and Culture Funding). Table 22 shows that more respondents (36%) opposed a new governing authority than favored it (23%).

Table 22

Support for New Governing Authority

New governing authority for arts, culture, and recreation in Milwaukee County.

Favor	23%
Oppose	36%
No Opinion	41%

Note: This question was asked of Milwaukee County residents only.

Conclusion

This report has documented the attendance of residents of Southeastern Wisconsin at the wide array of arts and culture events offered in the region, particularly those in Milwaukee. It has demonstrated public support for arts and culture from multiple perspectives. Strong majorities of respondents stated that arts and culture are valuable to the development of children and majorities indicate that they have an interest in having arts and culture venues in their communities. In addition, respondents to the regional survey see strong connections between an active arts and culture sector and (1) the overall economic and social vitality of downtown Milwaukee and the greater Milwaukee area, (2) the attractiveness of Milwaukee and the region to tourists and new residents, and (3) attraction of new businesses to the area. These responses, together with other data obtained through the survey interview, show arts and culture to be strongly valued by residents of Southeastern Wisconsin.