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Bonnie Nichols

National Endowment for the Arts

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BLS Spotlight on Statistics: Expenditures on Admissions to the Arts, Movies, Sporting Events, and other Entertainment

Abstract

In 2015, American consumers spent an average of \$652 on admissions to the arts, movies, sporting events, and other entertainment and recreational activities. In 2012, 70 percent of U.S. adults attended a live performing arts or sporting event or went to the movies.

This Spotlight on Statistics uses data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey and the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts to profile consumer spending and attendance at arts, sports, and entertainment events. For additional context, the Spotlight also examines selected personal consumption expenditure estimates from the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account.

Keywords

Consumer Expenditure Survey, Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, performing arts, consumer spending

Comments

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SEPTEMBER 2017

Expenditures On Admissions To The Arts, Movies, Sporting Events, And Other Entertainment

Bonnie Nichols

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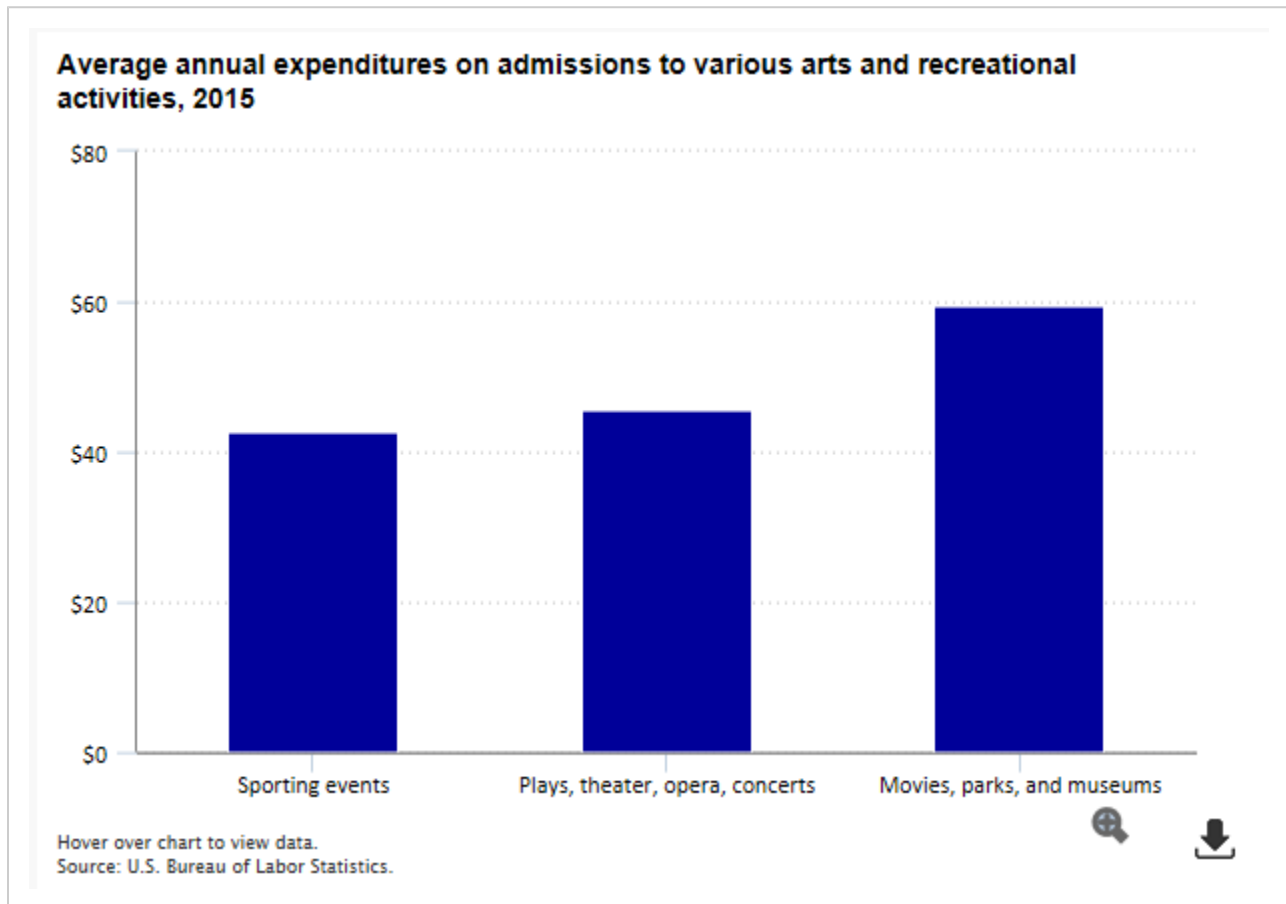
For additional context, the Spotlight also examines selected personal consumption expenditure estimates from the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account.

In 2015, Americans spent an average of \$652 on movies and arts, sports, and other entertainment

In 2015, U.S. consumers spent an average of \$652 on "fees and admissions," a spending category that includes purchases of movies tickets and admissions to performing arts, sporting, and other entertainment and recreation. In specific categories, outlays averaged \$46 to attend plays, concerts, and other performing arts events. That amount was close to the \$43 spent to attend sporting events, but it was less than the average spent to go to the movies or to visit parks and museums.

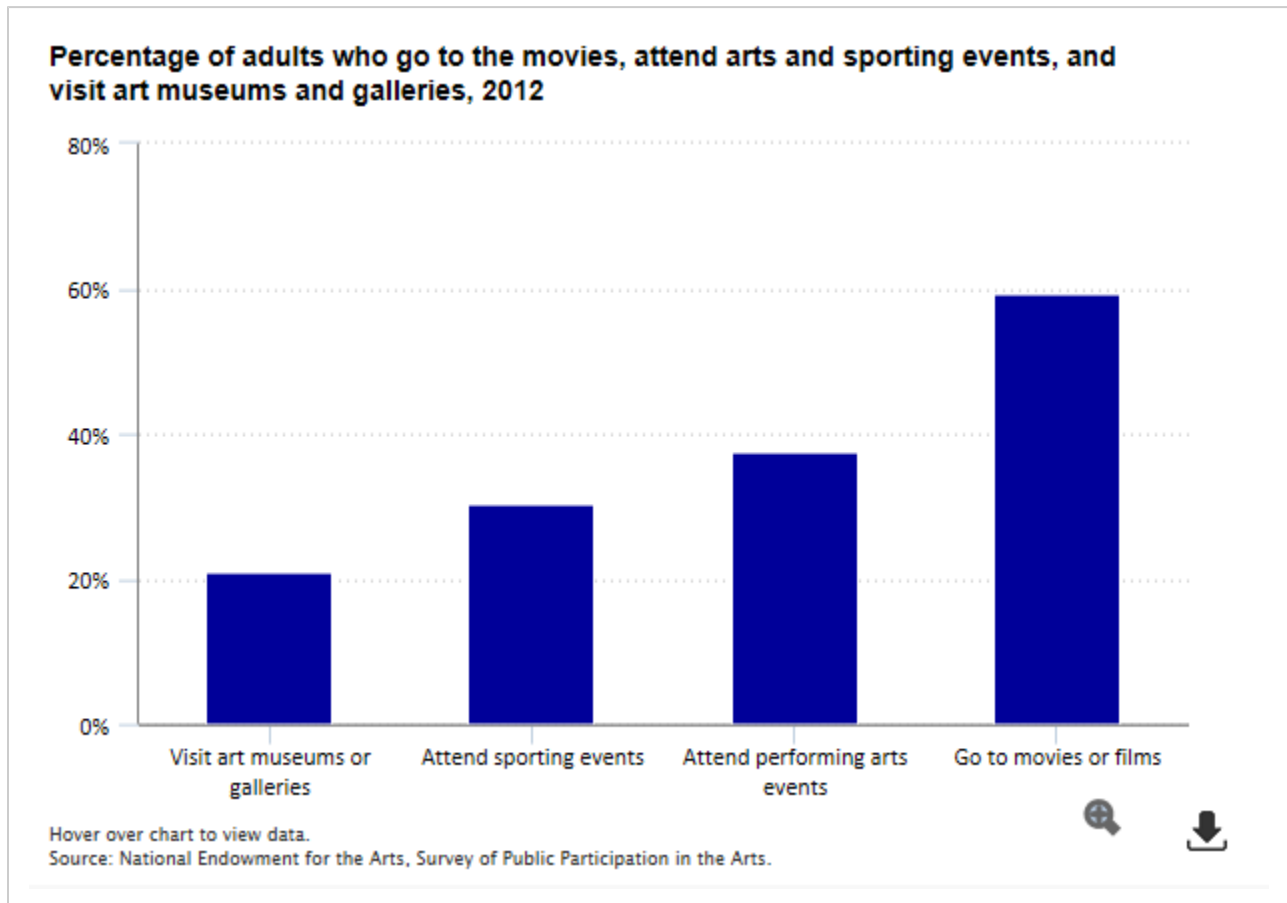
Most of the remainder is allocated to events in which the consumer actively participates, such as social, recreation, and health club memberships and fees for participant sports and recreational lessons.

(Note: Unlike other charts in this Spotlight, the figures shown here for specific ticket-buying categories exclude expenditures during out-of-town trips. While out-of-town spending estimates are available for movies, parks, and museums, and for sporting events, the survey does not report out-of-town expenditures on plays, theater, opera, and concerts.)



Annually, nearly 70 percent of U.S. adults go to the movies, arts and sporting events, museums

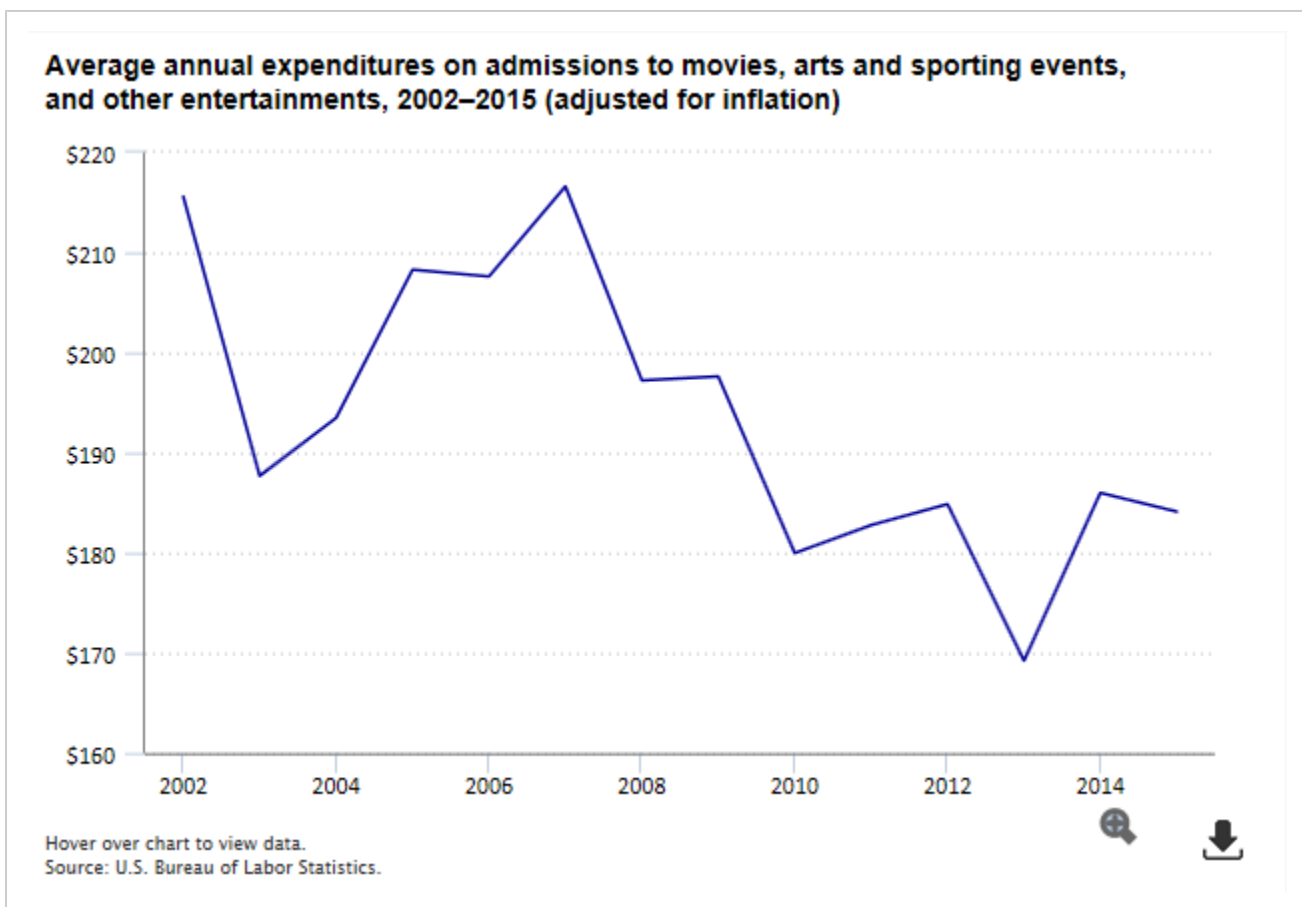
The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts polls Americans about their participation in arts and leisure activities. In 2012, 59 percent of U.S. adults went to the movies at least once; roughly 30 percent attended at least one performing arts or sporting event; and 21 percent visited an art museum or gallery.



Spending on arts and entertainment admissions has not fully recovered from the 2007–09 recession

Between 2014 and 2015, there was little change in the amount consumers spent on admissions to movies, arts and sporting events, and other entertainment (roughly \$630 to \$650). Over longer periods, however, consumer expenditures on admissions have been strongly cyclical. Between 2008 and 2013 (a period that included the severe 2007–09 recession and its aftermath), real (that is, inflation-adjusted) spending on entertainment admissions fell by 14 percent. By 2015, six years after the recession ended, real spending on admissions to entertainment had not yet recovered to prerecession levels.

The 2003 decline in spending on arts and entertainment admissions likely reflects the aftermath of the relatively mild U.S. recession of 2001.



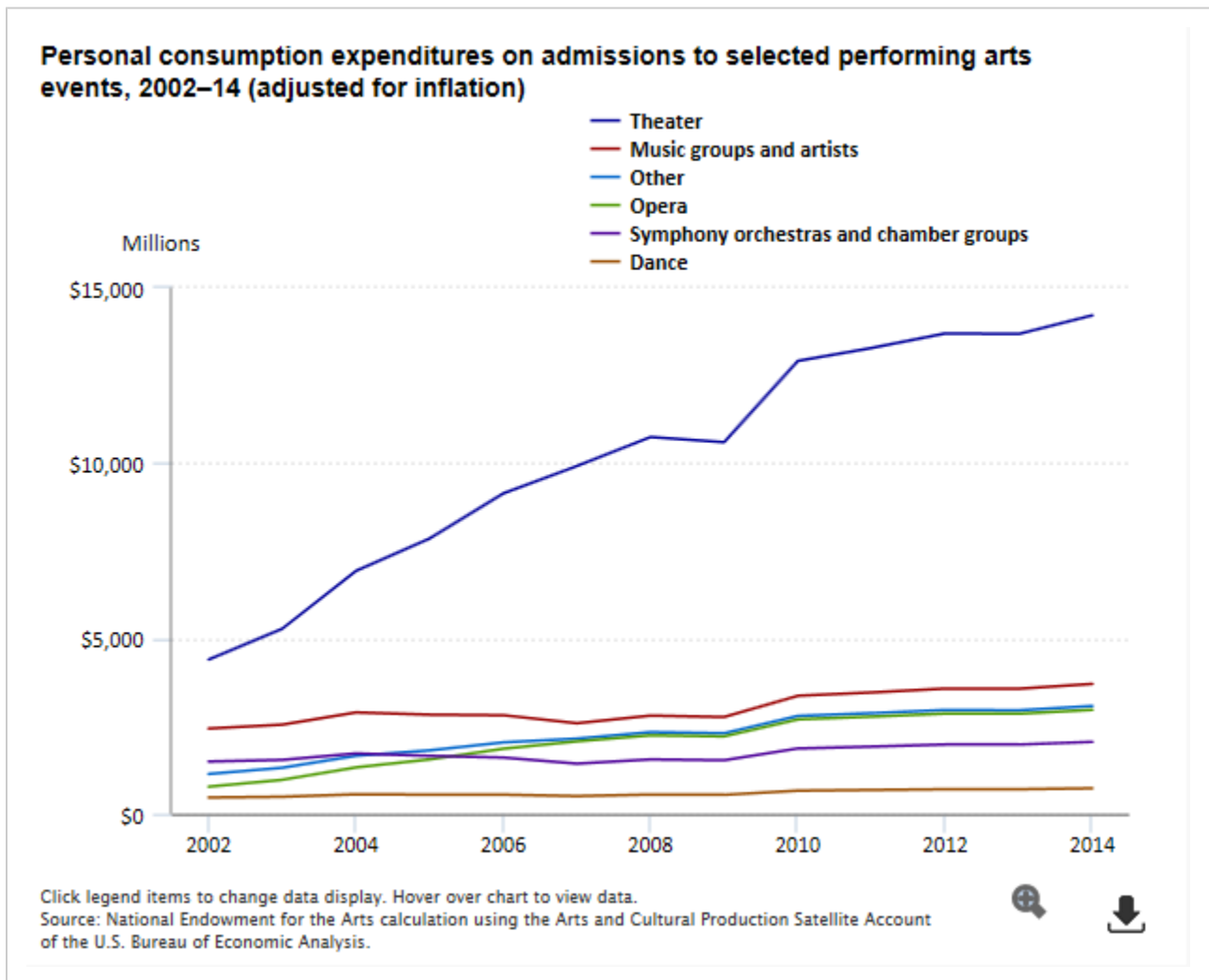
Expenditures on admissions to specific performing arts events also exhibit cyclical fluctuations

Estimates from the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account show personal consumption expenditures on admissions to detailed performing arts events.

Personal consumption expenditures (adjusted for inflation) on admissions to performances by symphony orchestras and chamber groups declined in 4 out of 5 years from 2004 to 2009. Similar declines occurred in spending on admissions to concerts by music groups and artists, both classical and popular music, such as rock, country, and jazz.

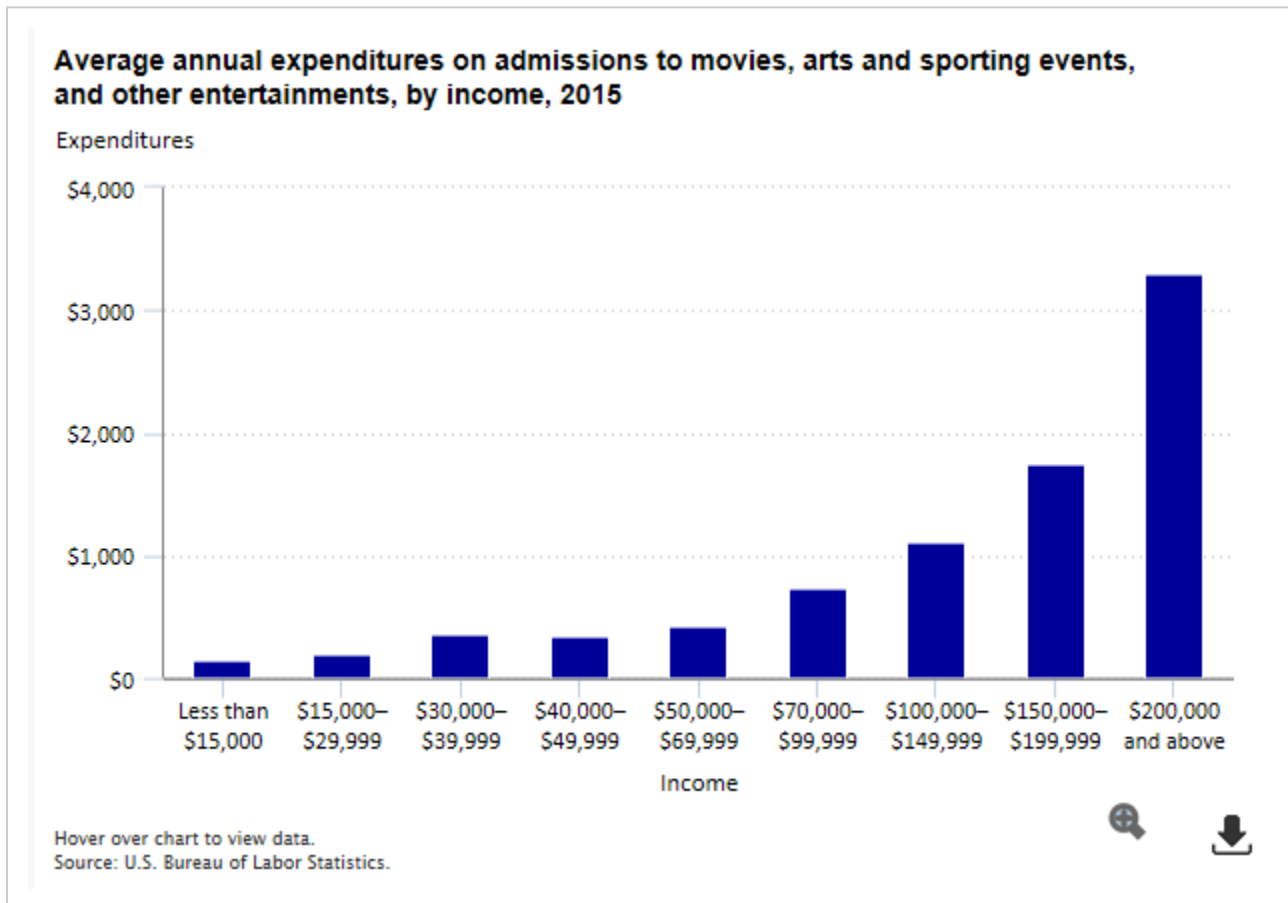
Personal consumption expenditures on admissions to concerts by music groups and artists increased by 22 percent in 2010 and slowly trended upward in 2011–14.

Consumer spending on admissions to most of the performing arts exhibit patterns similar to those of classical and popular-music concerts. The exception, however, was in spending on tickets to the opera and theater, which was relatively unscathed by the recession of 2007–09.



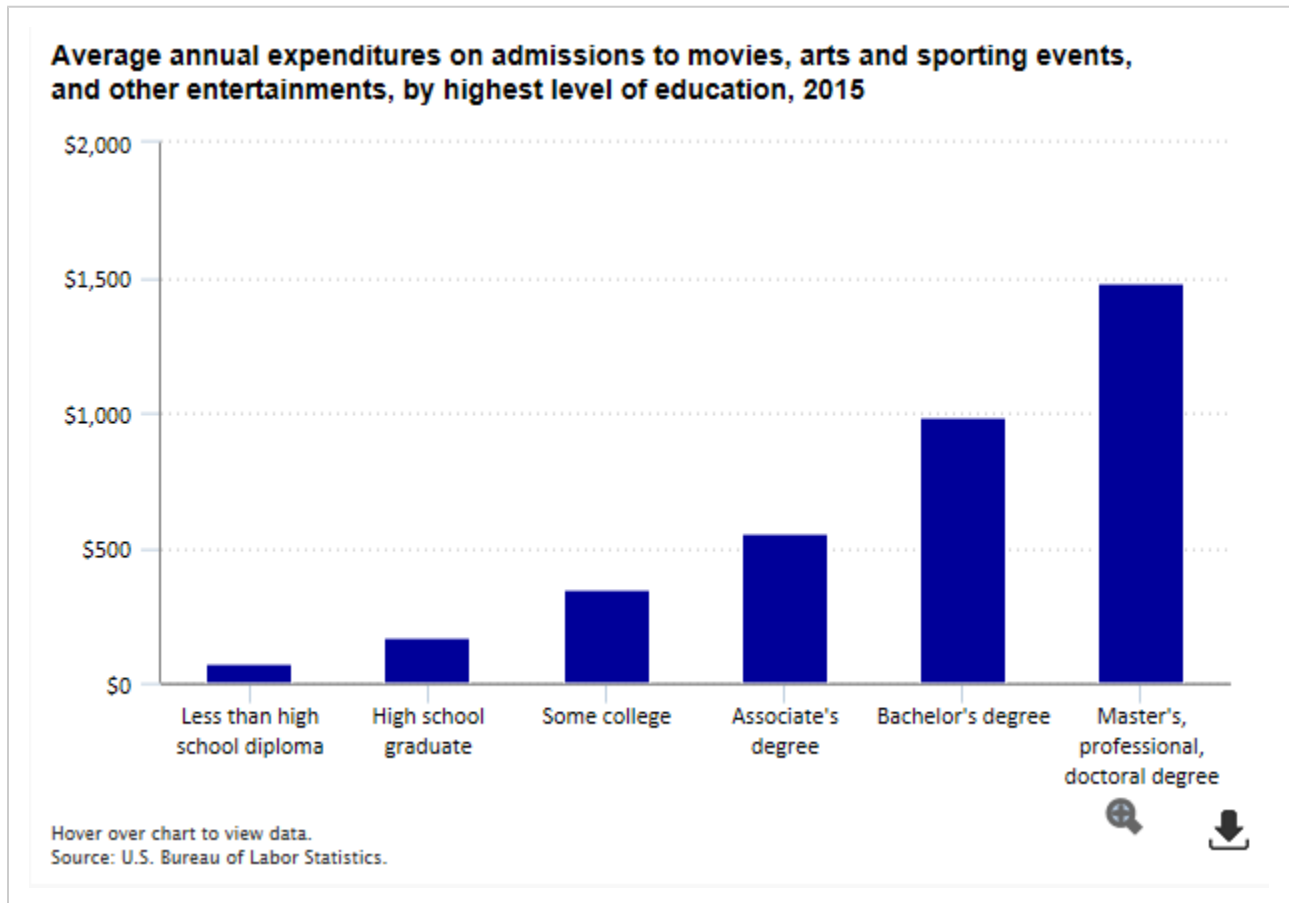
Expenditures on arts and entertainment rise with income

A similar pattern appears in spending by income levels. Like personal consumption of many goods and services, expenditures on tickets and admissions to entertainment and recreation rise with income. Consumers with incomes of \$200,000 or more (before taxes) spend nearly 8 times more on entertainment admissions than do consumers with incomes between \$50,000 and \$70,000.



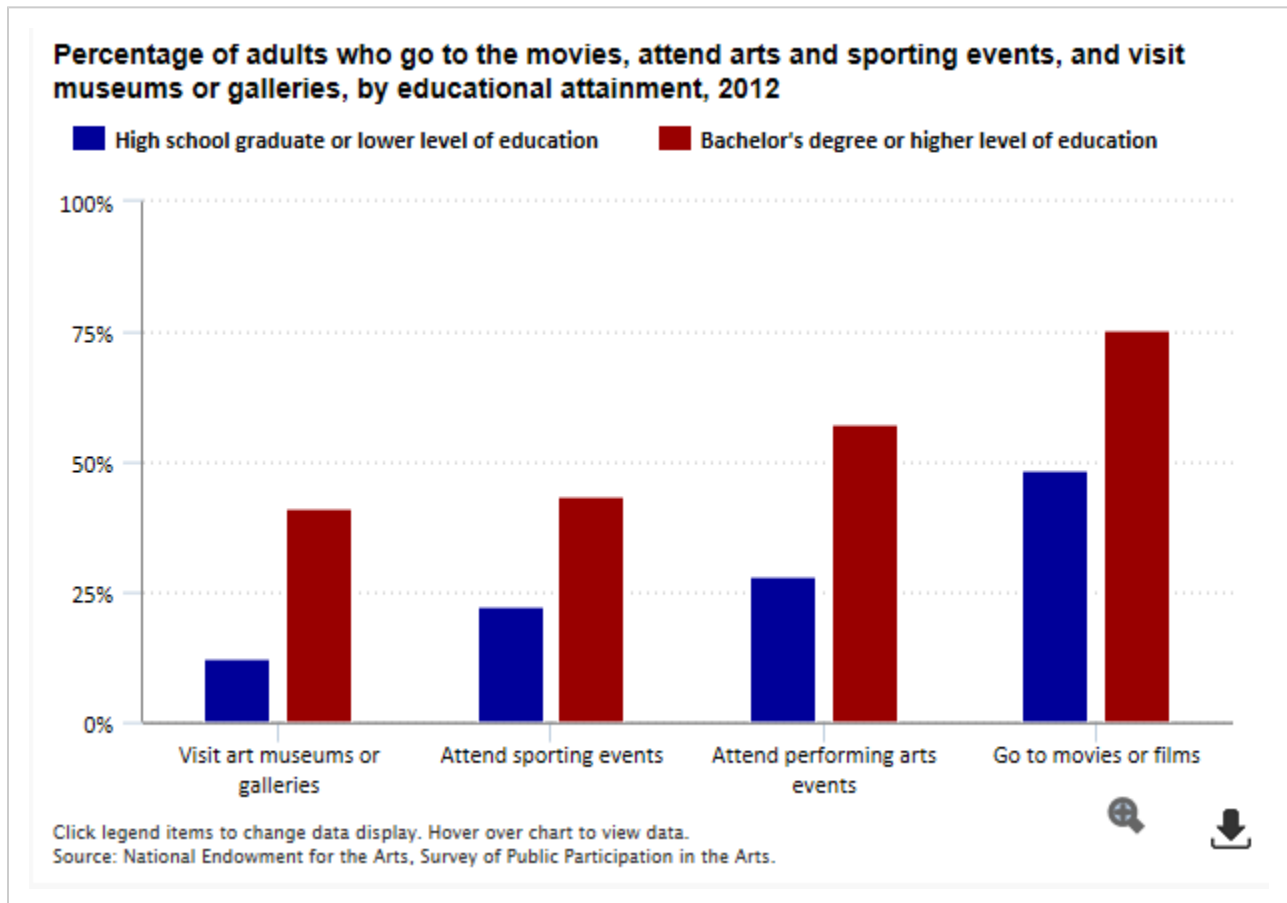
Expenditures on arts and entertainment rise with education

Spending on fees and admissions rises sharply with education. Consumers holding bachelor's degrees, for example, spend nearly 6 times more on entertainment admissions than do consumers with high school diplomas; consumers with graduate school or professional training spend almost 9 times more.



Attendance rates also rise with education and income

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts shows a similar pattern in attendance. For example, 41 percent of college-educated adults visit art museums or galleries; the rate for adults with less education is just under 13 percent. Moreover, adults with family incomes of \$150,000 or more attend art museums and galleries at rates twice that of adults with less income.

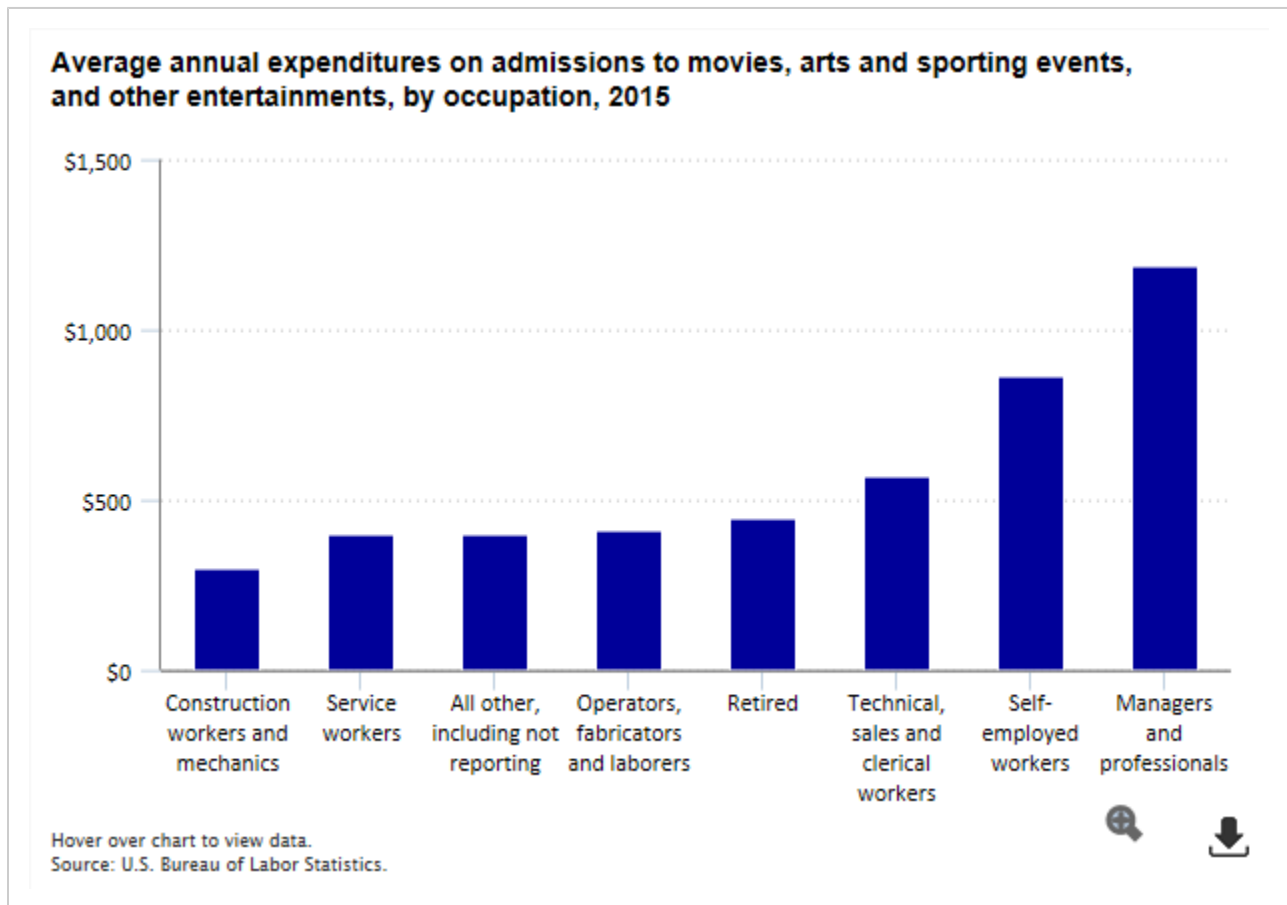


Workers in management and professional occupations spend the most on arts and entertainment

High levels of education filter through to the occupations of adults who spend more on entertainment admissions and fees.

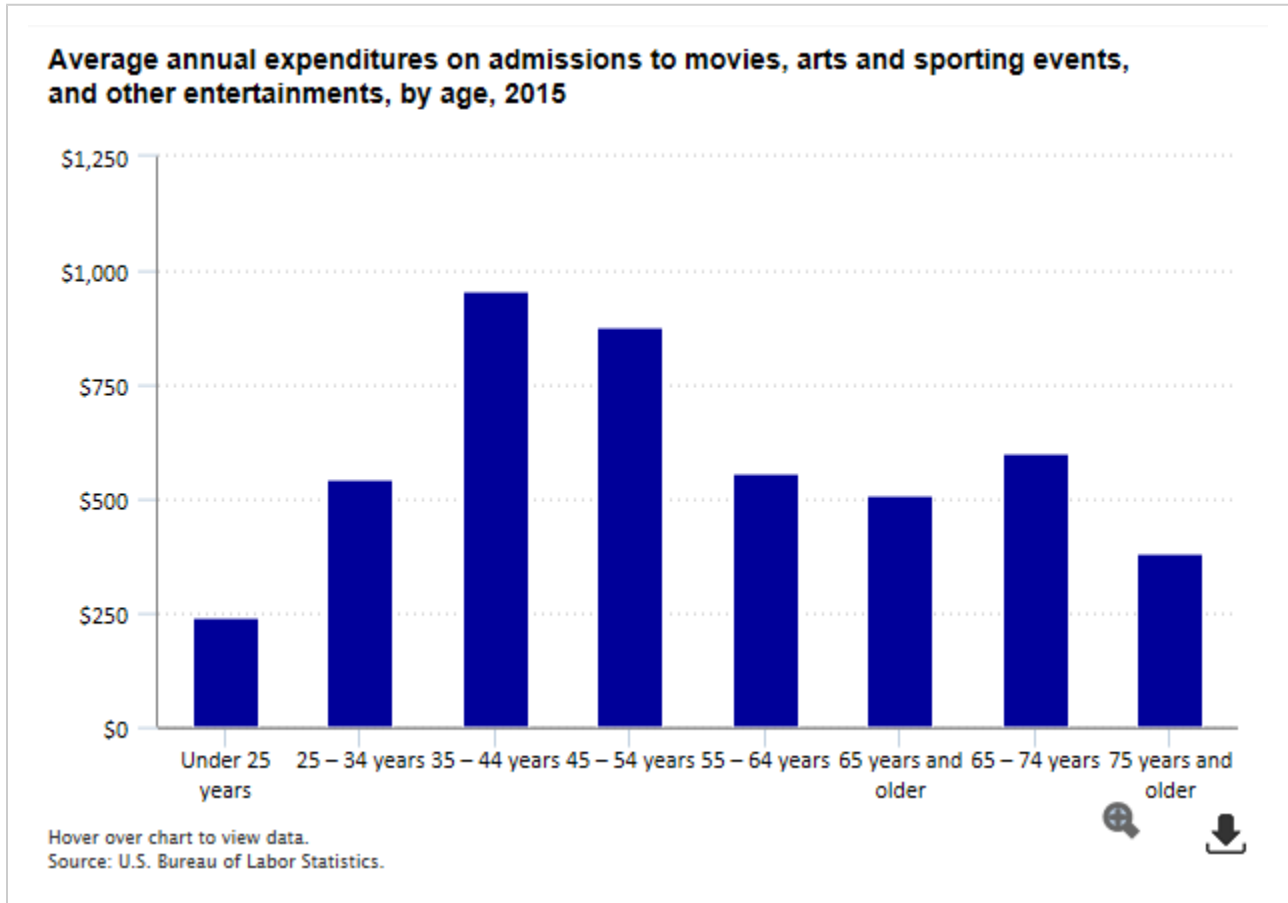
Workers employed in management and professional occupations spend far more on arts and entertainment fees and admissions than do workers in most other occupations. For example, managers and professionals spend nearly 4 times more than construction workers and mechanics spend, and they spend 3 times more than do service workers—a broad occupational group that includes hairstylists, food-preparation workers, and firefighters.

From the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, similar results are evident in attendance. More than half of all managers and professional workers (57 percent) attend performing arts events; 44 percent go to sporting events. By contrast, 30–35 percent of service workers attend performing arts and sporting events.



Consumers ages 35 to 54 spend the greatest amounts on tickets to arts and entertainment events

Consumers ages 35 to 54 spend on average more than \$900 per year on fees and admissions to movies, arts and sporting events, and other entertainment and recreation. Spending for these age groups is substantially larger than for consumers in other age groups, particularly young consumers under age 25 (who spend an annual average of \$241) and consumers age 75 and older (who spend less than \$400).



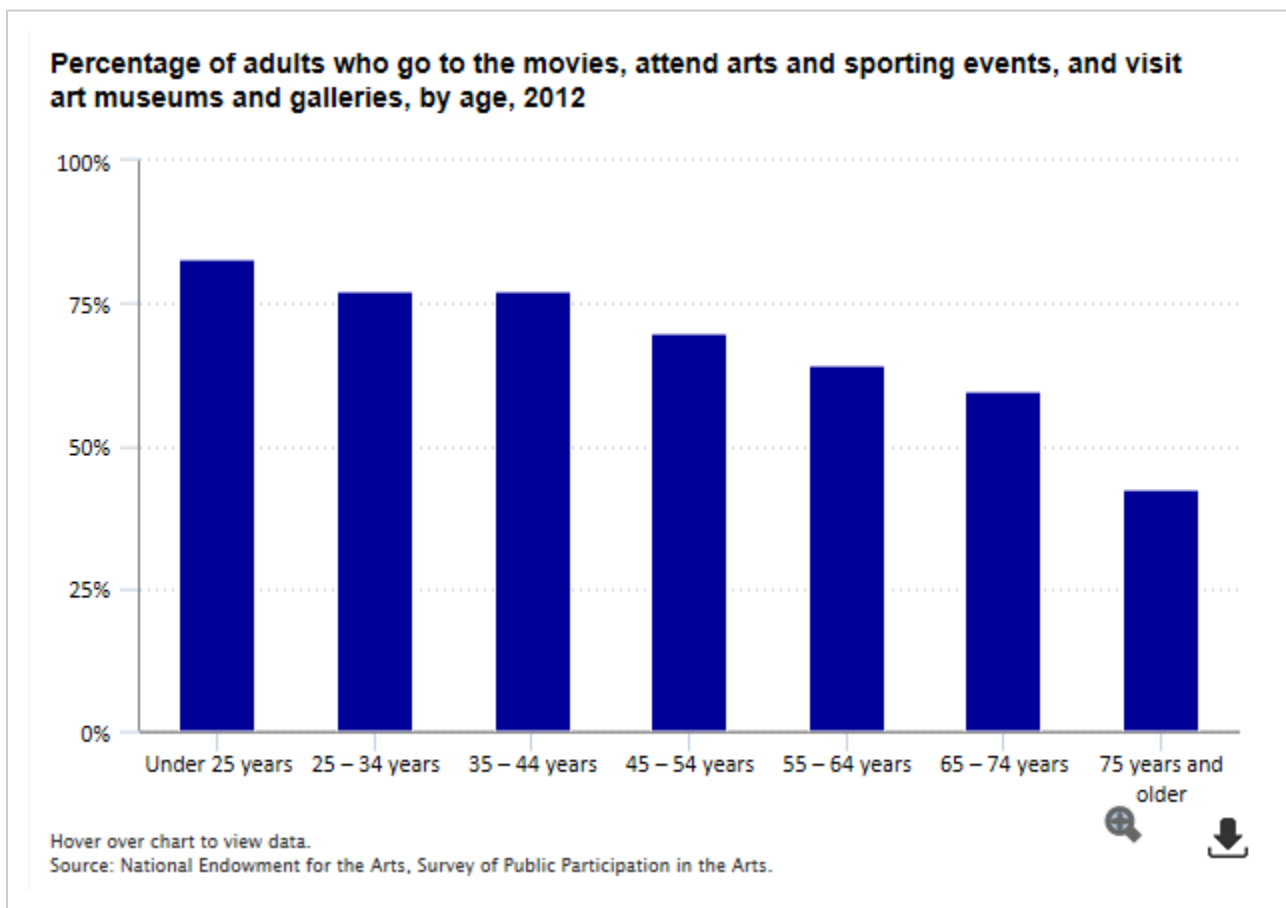
But young adults attend entertainment events at higher rates

Roughly 80 percent of adults 18–44 years old attend arts and sporting events and other entertainment. By contrast, 70 percent of adults ages 45–54 attend. Higher attendance among young adults may reflect, at least in part, free or low-price performances available in venues such as nightclubs and restaurants.

Low-price performing arts events may also be on hand at colleges and universities, which also are popular among 18–24 year-olds.

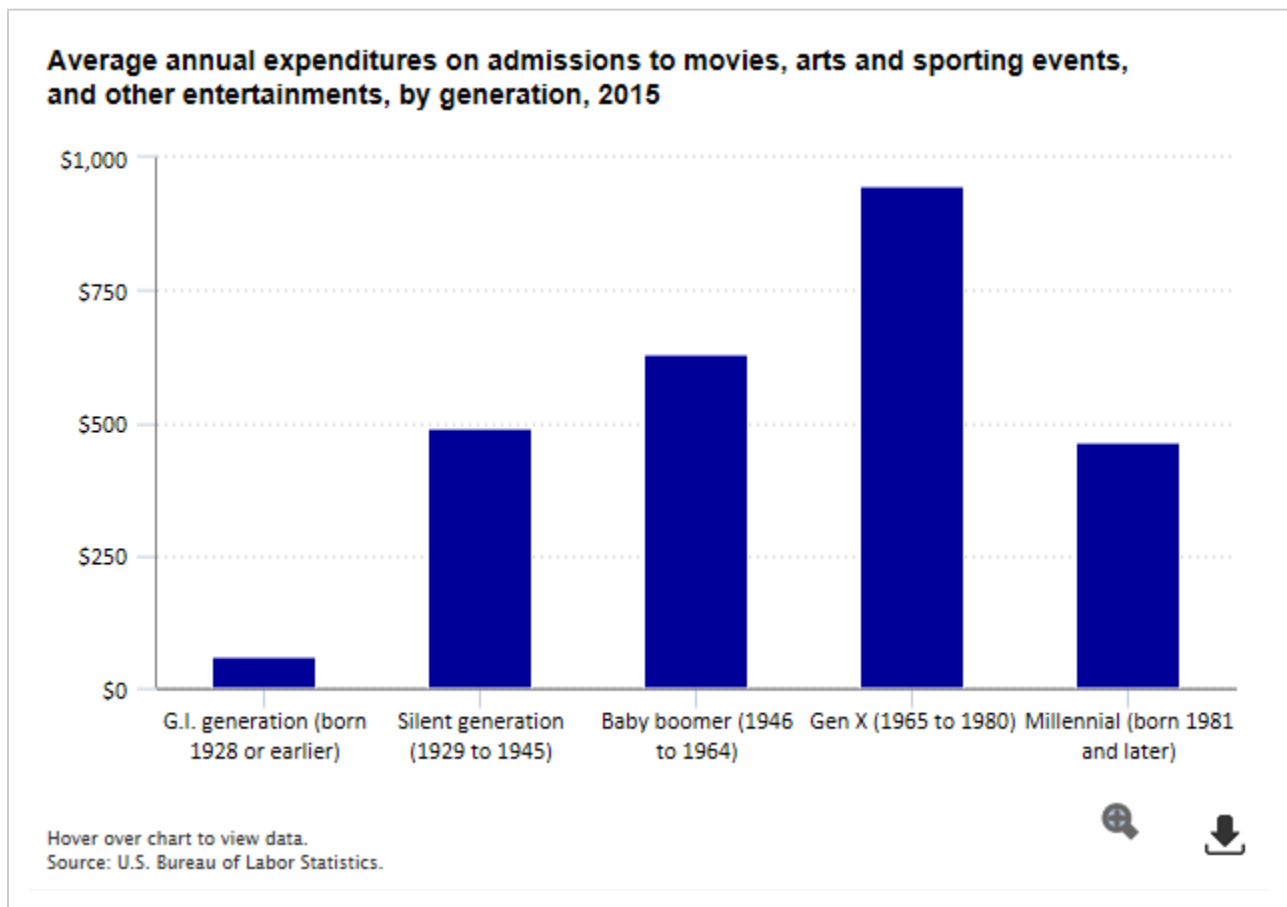
In 2012, 19 percent of adults ages 18–24 attended performances or saw art exhibits in a restaurant, bar, nightclub, or coffee shop. Thirteen percent of adults ages 45–54 attended such events in bars and restaurants.

Similarly, 16 percent of 18–24 year-olds attended an arts event at a college or university. For all other age groups, college-campus attendance rates were 7 percent or lower.



Gen Xers spend the most on entertainment and recreation admissions

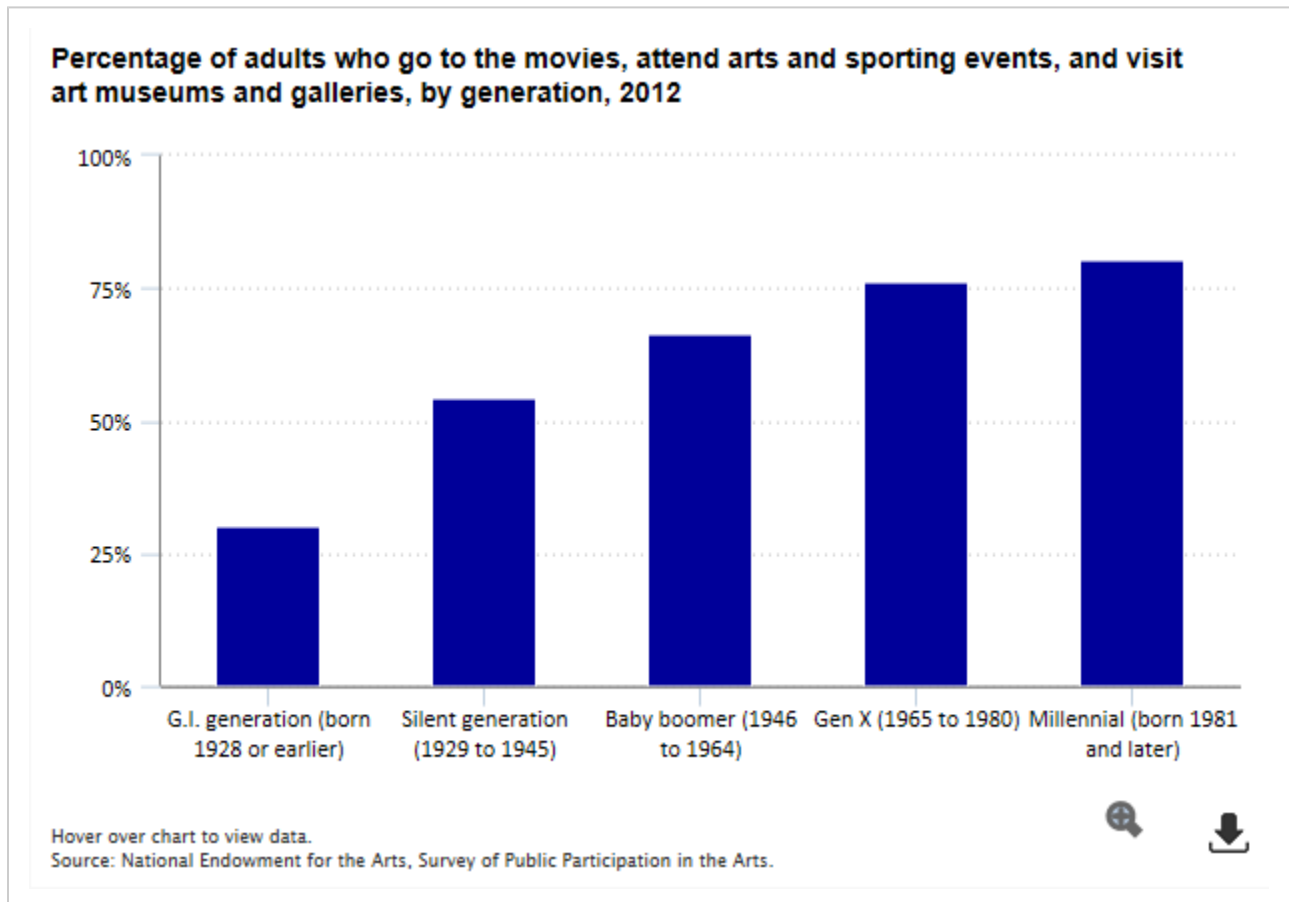
In 2015, U.S. consumers born between 1965 and 1980, also known as Generation X or Gen Xers, spent close to \$950 on fees and admissions to arts, sports, and entertainment and recreation events. That amount was far greater than expenditures by other generations. That same year, for example, Millennials (those born in 1981 or later) and the Silent generation (those born between 1929 and 1945) each spent less than \$500 on arts and entertainment admissions; the G.I. generation (those born in 1928 or earlier) spent just \$60. Baby Boomers spent more—an average of \$629.



Gen Xers and Millennials report the highest rates of entertainment attendance

Like spending on admissions, Gen Xers attend arts, sports, and other entertainment at higher rates than do the Baby Boom, Silent, and G.I. generations. Unlike the scenario for spending, however, Millennials are similar to Gen Xers in arts-and-entertainment attendance.

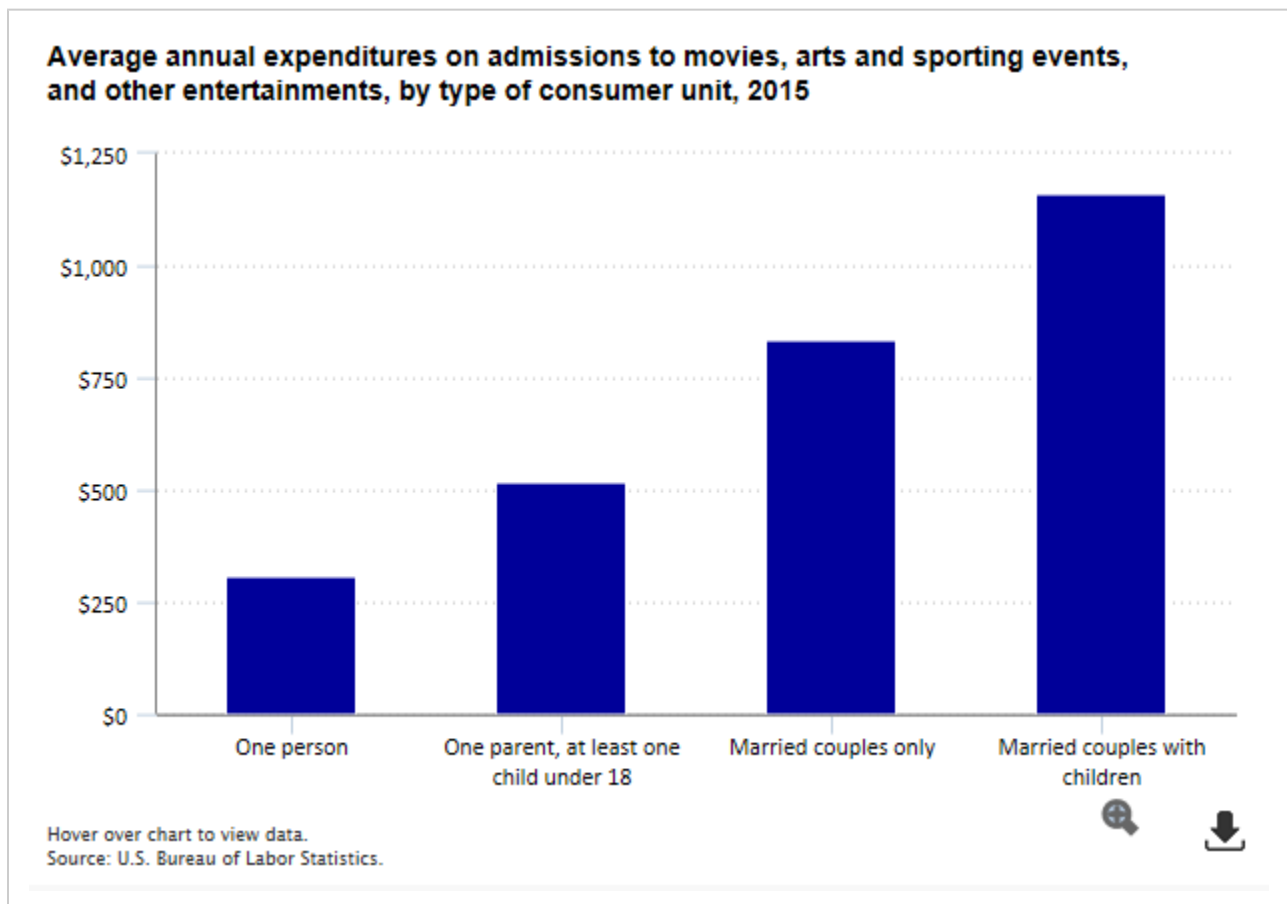
In 2012, 80 percent of Millennials went to the movies, attended an arts or sporting event, or visited an art museum or gallery. That rate was similar to the 76 percent of Gen Xers who attended events in 2012.



Married couples spend more than single parent and one-person households

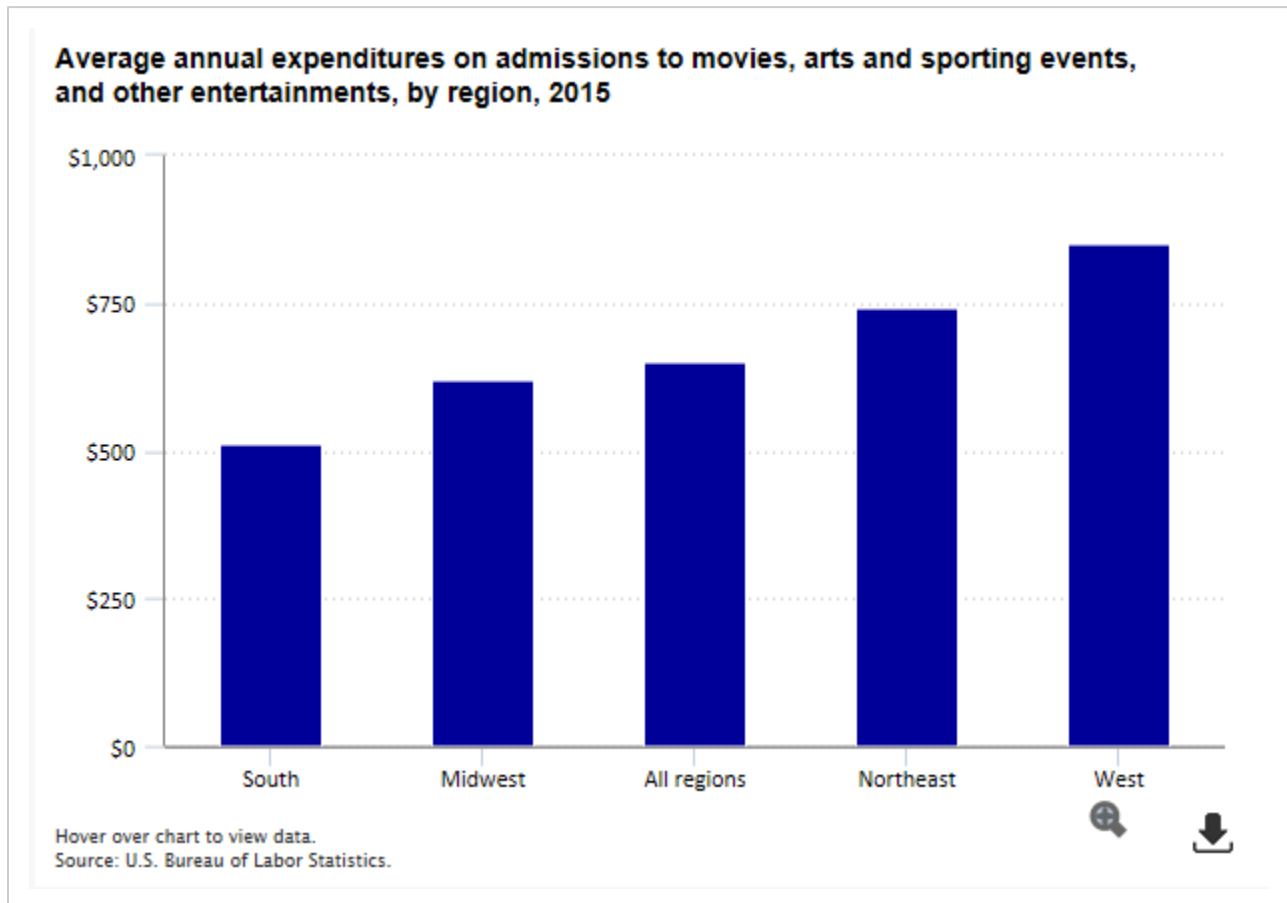
In 2015, married-couples-only consumer units (that is, married couples without children) spent 2.7 times more, on average, on entertainment fees and admissions than one-person units spent. On fees and admissions, married couples with children spent nearly 2.3 times more than did single parents with children.

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts shows that marital status appears to have little influence on attendance. In 2012, 76 percent of single (never married) adults attended entertainment events. That rate was similar to the 72 percent of married adults who attended.



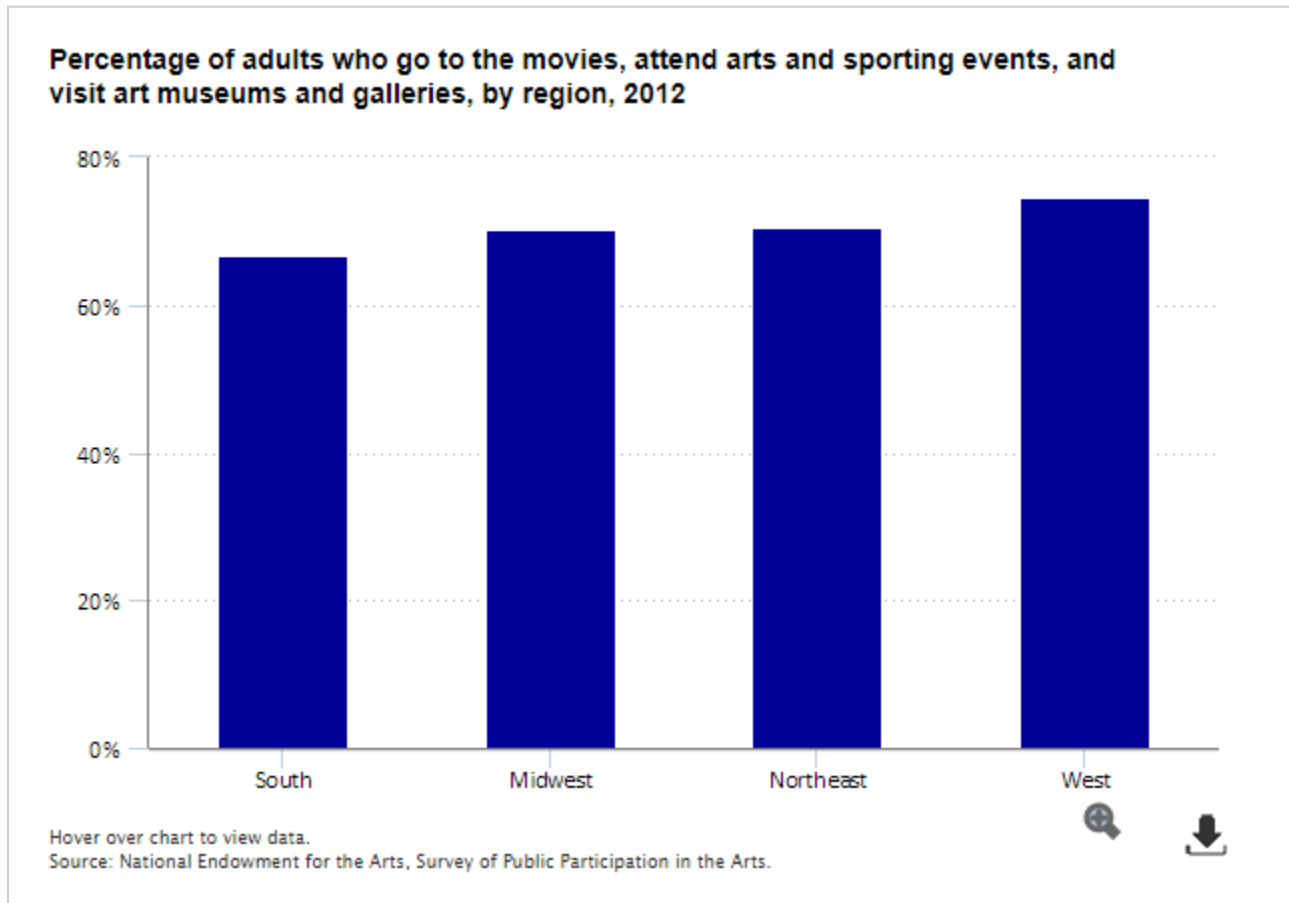
Consumers in the West and Northeast spend more to attend arts, sports, and entertainment events

Consumers in the West and Northeast regions spend an annual average of more than \$700 to attend movies, arts and sporting events, and other entertainment and recreation. Consumers in the South, by contrast, spend little more than \$500 annually on fees and admissions.



Arts and entertainment attendance rates are highest in the West

Similarly, as indicated by the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, arts and entertainment attendance rates in the West are greater than rates reported in the South—75 percent versus 67 percent—though attendance rates among adults living in the West, Northeast, and Midwest regions are similar.



More information

Bonnie Nichols is an operations research analyst with the [Office of Research & Analysis](#), National Endowment for the Arts.

The data presented in this *Spotlight* are from the 2015 [Consumer Expenditure Survey](#) annual calendar year and experimental tables published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Presented here is the aggregate of expenditures on admissions to movies, arts and sporting events, and other entertainment. Referred to as "fees and admissions," this category of spending includes fees and admissions to: plays, theater, opera, and concerts; movies, parks, and museums; sporting events; participant sports; social, recreation, and health club memberships; and admissions to out-of-town arts, sports, and entertainment events.

The Consumer Expenditure Survey program consists of two surveys, the Quarterly Interview Survey and the Diary Survey, that provide information on the buying habits of America's consumers, including data on their expenditures, income, and consumer unit (families and single consumers) characteristics. The survey data are collected for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau. (The Interview component of the survey is used to collect data on arts and entertainment fees and admissions.)

The Consumer Expenditure Survey is the only federal survey to provide information on the complete range of consumers' expenditures and incomes, as well as the characteristics of those consumers.

Also reported are estimates from the [2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts](#). This survey is the nation's largest and most reliable survey of how American adults (age 18 and older) engage with the arts. On behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. Census Bureau has conducted the survey six times since 1982, with the most recent wave occurring in 2012.

[The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account](#) is produced by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2014, arts and cultural production contributed \$729.6 billion to the U.S. economy, or 4.19 percent of gross domestic product.