

DOORS OPEN

Culture & Communities Study

Lower Than Average Cultural Participants

WINTER 2026



DOORS
OPEN

4 CULTURE


Wilkening Consulting
audience research | knowledge curation

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RESULTS BY PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

This study examined participation patterns through three lenses: museum visitation, live performance attendance, and participation in an assortment of other cultural and creative activities.

There are two ways to assess participation:

INCIDENCE: A binary yes/no. Does someone participate in cultural activities? In King County, nearly all King County residents (93%) participated in cultural activities in the past year, and 7% did not. This is a measure of *incidence*.

FREQUENCY: A measure of *how often* someone participates in cultural activities in a defined period.

Since 93% of King County residents participate in cultural activities, determining rates of *frequency* is important to understand participation patterns.

ASSESSING CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT:

FREQUENCY RATES

A scoring system was developed to assess overall cultural engagement among King County residents using *frequency measures*.

A number of different scoring systems were tested, and the simplest produced the clearest results. Each respondent was assigned a score between 0 and 30, with a maximum 10 points scored each based on their reported visitation at museums, attendance at live performances, and participation in a set of six other cultural activities.

Maximum 10 points possible:

Museum visitation
based on frequency

Maximum 10 points possible:

Live performance
attendance based
on frequency

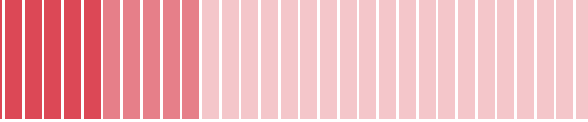
Maximum 10 points possible (1.67 pts each):

Explored history or heritage
Attended a cultural festival
STEM events
Literary arts events
Participated in customs or practices of a specific
cultural community
Participated in Indigenous, Native, and traditional
cultural activities

LOWER THAN AVERAGE CULTURAL PARTICIPANTS

Percent of King
County Residents: **36%**

Participation Score: **0 to 10**
[out of 30]



Leisure Time Patterns

- Least engaged in general leisure activities
- Priorities for leisure time: fun, relaxing, time with family/friends

How They Hear About Community Events

- Word-of mouth, Facebook
- But not as tuned in as other segments

Barriers to Cultural Participation

- Cost
- Crowds (most likely to cite this barrier)
- Interest (lower levels generally)

Cultural Activities Most Likely to Visit/Participate in

- Concerts, zoos and aquaria, cultural festivals

Expectations of Cultural Organizations

- A sense of welcome and belonging
- Educating children and young people
- A small, but significant, percentage of them hold anti-inclusive values

Demographic Characteristics

- More likely to be 50 or older
- Lower levels of educational attainment and income
- Less engaged politically
- No significant differences by accessibility needs, race or ethnicity

Summary Statement

They are glad cultural activities are in their community for others ... and they will also try them out from time to time if they are close by, inexpensive, and convenient.

