To Go or Not To Go:

Identifying Barriers to Attending On-Campus Arts Events

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Abstract

Arts organizations across the nation are facing steep declines in attendance and participation levels (Blume-Kohout et al., 2015, NEA, 2023). If these organizations wish to continue to remain relevant in the ever-shifting cultural zeitgeist, they must find new ways to connect with constituents in their communities who do not currently patronize their programming. One approach to increasing engagement with non-audiences is to understand and address the barriers to attendance that prospective audiences face. This research study aims to identify the real and perceived barriers to attendance that students at Indiana University Bloomington experience. A web-administered survey is used to examine the different barriers to attendance that students face at twelve different on-campus arts organizations at Indiana University with offerings ranging from theater, classical music, art galleries, cinema, and more. The findings suggest that the most common barriers to attendance are cost, a lack of knowledge, and a lack of time. Other barriers such as accessibility concerns and social factors also play a role in constraining student attendance at arts offerings. These results indicate that if on-campus arts organizations wish to increase student attendance levels, they must address the various barriers to attendance that students experience.

1. Introduction

Arts and culture are an integral part of American life. According to the 2022 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (SPPA), 52% of US adults created or consumed art (NEA, 2023). During a survey period when the nation was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic, a racial reckoning, and a turbulent sociopolitical climate, over half of Americans still took the time to make and experience art. What's more, the art and culture sector makes up nearly five million jobs and accounts for over $1 trillion of the country's gross domestic product (BEA, 2021).

The arts and culture sector also encompasses so much more than what is traditionally defined as "art." In the 2022 SPPA, while respondents could report attendance at conventional arts events such as stage plays, opera, ballet, and art museums and galleries, they could also choose from art forms such as movies, art or film festivals, Latin or salsa music, and visiting historic parks, buildings, or monuments (NEA, 2023). This expansion of what is considered "art" captures just how important the sector remains in our cultural zeitgeist.

Despite the prevalence of the arts and cultural sector, attendance at arts organizations of every discipline has faced a steady decline over the last two decades. The 2022 SPPA reported a 6% decline in overall arts attendance between 2017 and 2022, with decreasing attendance numbers occurring in nearly every art form (NEA, 2023). While some of these declines can no doubt be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trend began long before the pandemic's onset. The 2017 SPPA showed that 133 million adults attended a live arts event (NEA, 2019). That number dropped to 122 million in 2022. Because many arts organizations are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations, they rely on sustaining or building their audience base, receiving 90% of their revenue through earned and contributed income streams such as ticket sales or donations (Cohen, 2021). If arts organizations wish to address the declines in participation, they must

understand why potential audience members choose not to attend a program or performance. Failing to recoup these lost audience bases or building connections with new constituency groups could result in arts organizations losing revenue and ultimately falling out of relevance in the American cultural zeitgeist.

Arts organizations looking to combat the gradual declines in arts attendance must cultivate and sustain new audiences. Additionally, they must find ways to reengage with audiences that have, for one reason or another, halted their participation. A key question to consider regarding halted participation is: what are the barriers that keep people from attending arts events?

Current research regarding arts participation focuses primarily on who is participating, what art forms are most patronized, and the most popular methods of art consumption (NEA, 2023, Novak-Leonard et al., 2015, Walker et al., 2002). Although there has been some research regarding what constraints to attendance exist, much of the literature is at least a decade old and draws data from national studies such as the SPPA or the General Social Survey. There has been little research into how barriers exist at the community level as opposed to nationally. Further, of the limited research conducted regarding how different sociodemographic groups experience barriers to attendance, none have focused on college-aged audiences. Long-term arts attendance provides a number of social and personal benefits, including a stronger sense of self and deeper connections with communities (Blume-Kohout et al., 2015). Understanding the constraints that 18- to 24-year-olds face, and addressing them accordingly, could help to create lifelong recipients of these benefits.

The purpose of this study is to explore the real and perceived barriers to attending arts organizations that exist on the Indiana University-Bloomington campus. For the purposes of the

study, real barriers are defined as objective logistical factors, while perceived barriers are subjective factors that are experienced uniquely by individuals. The findings are meant to help on-campus arts organizations address the barriers that students may face, in the hopes that they will begin to grow their audience base and engage meaningfully with a wider range of students. The research will be conducted through a survey distributed to students at Indiana University-Bloomington to understand how respondents react to the existence or lack of real barriers to on-campus arts offerings, as well as to define the perceived barriers that they experience. Arts offerings in the study performing arts such as theatre, dance, and music, art galleries and museums, libraries, film organizations, and art and cultural festivals.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Arts Participation

"The arts" is a vague, subjective term. Theories and data about participation vary depending on how broadly or narrowly it is defined. Over the past three decades, there has been much research into who is participating in the arts, what art forms are being patronized and how, and why people continue to attend arts offerings.

A common misconception made of the arts is that the term is limited to traditional art forms such as theater, opera, ballet, and classical music. In the 2012 SPPA, the National Arts Endowment dubbed classic art forms like these "benchmark activities" (NEA, 2015). When this limited definition is used to survey participation in the art, the results seem bleak. Take, for example, opera. In 2012, 2.1% of adults reported that they'd attended an opera performance in the last 12 months (NEA, 2015) That number decreased to 0.7% in 2022. Participation numbers for other "benchmark activities," including jazz music, ballet, and non-musical plays, remained

below 10% and decreased between 2012 and 2022 (NEA, 2023). Such a limited view of the arts, yielding so little interest and participation, would make a study into increasing attendance hard to justify.

When the definition of "the arts" is expanded, a more interesting picture emerges. In a 2001 study of arts participation, both a broad and narrow definition was used when asking survey respondents if they participated in any arts or culture activities. While the narrow definition was limited to the NEA's benchmark activities, the broad definition included popular art forms as well. In each of the cities where the survey was conducted, there was a near 20% difference in positive responses favoring the broad definition (Walker et al., 2002). In the 2022 SPPA, 21.2% of respondents reported that they attended arts offerings other than the benchmark activities specifically listed. "This may include: rock, folk, or country music concerts; rap or hip-hop performances; comedy/improv, magic shows, or circus acts" (NEA, 2023). The implication of this data is that using a limited, exclusionary definition for the arts leaves out a large and valuable segment of arts consumers. For the purposes of this study, a broad and expansive definition of "the arts" will be used.

A broad definition of arts participation must also include how individuals participate. Novak-Leonard, Wong, and English (2015) distinguish two different kinds of art participation. Receptive participation is a passive activity wherein an audience is presented with a complete work of art. Many benchmark arts activities use a receptive participation mode. The second way in which people engage is through participatory arts. The participatory arts are collaborative in nature, allowing people to "connect, contribute, and create through the arts" (Novak-Leonard et al., 2015). Participatory practices include educational and artmaking activities.

Sonke et al. (2023), in their two-pronged definition of arts participation, specified five modes through which people participate in the arts. These include "attending live arts… creating, practicing, performing, and sharing art, participating in social… arts practices, consuming arts via electronic… media, [and] learning in, through, and about the arts" (Sonke et al., 2023). These modes of arts participation appear on the SPPA as well. In the 2022 report, the most popular arts consumption mode was via digital media, with participation in this category at 75%. Roughly 50% of respondents attended live events or created their own art, and 29% learned an art form (NEA, 2023).

For the purposes of this study, a two-pronged definition of arts participation, similar to Sonke's, will be used. First, "arts" will be defined as any cultural organization that presents or invokes the creation of art. This will include "benchmark" organizations such as theater, opera, ballet, classical music, and visual art galleries, as well as popular music venues, movie theaters, literary organizations, cultural and historical centers, and art-making organizations. Second, "participation" will be defined as attendance at or consumption of an arts organization's programming or assistance with the creation of art.

2.2 Interested Non-Participation and the Existence of Barriers

A study interested in increasing arts participation would be an exercise in futility if people who did not already patronize the arts displayed a clear lack of interest. However, a number of studies and national datasets have proven that some non-participants in the arts may be interested in altering their attendance habits. For the purposes of this study, this segment of individuals will be called "interested non-participants."

Blume-Kohout, Leonard, and Novak-Leonard introduce the concept of interested non-participants in a 2015 study of arts participation. The data, derived from the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS), shows that roughly one in seven US adults were interested in attending an arts event, but ultimately did not (Blume-Kohout, et al., 2015). This finding was reaffirmed in the 2016 GSS, in which that 21.4% of respondents reported interested non-participation for at least one arts event (GSS Data Explorer, n.d.). The interested non-participant is not a new phenomenon, either. A study of data from the 1985 SPPA showed that one in three US adults was interested in attending more arts events than they currently did (West, 1987).

The concept of interested non-participants implies that there is something barring people from participation at arts organizations. If one is interested in attending a performance or exhibit, but for some reason does not, a constraint to their participation exists. For the purposes of this study, any constraint that keeps someone from their desired arts participation levels will be called "barriers to participation."

Research about barriers to arts participation indicates that there are two primary types. The first, real barriers, are physical and logistical factors that are objectively experienced. Tian, Crompton, and Witt (1996) found that the most commonly reported constraints to attending cultural organizations in Galveston, Texas were cost of entry, time, and difficulty of access (Tian et al., 1996). Similarly, Blume-Kohout, Leonard, and Novak-Leonard (2015) found that nearly 50% of interested non-participants surveyed in the 2012 GSS chose not to attend an arts event due to lack of time. Just under 40% of respondents also answered that high costs were also a barrier to participation (Blume-Kohout et al., 2015). Jun, Kyle, and O'Leary (2011), using data from the 1997 SPPA, also studied barriers to arts participation. Survey respondents reported that

structural constraints were the most commonly experienced, and "the constraint items most frequently reported were time, cost, facilities, and location problems" (Jun et al., 2011).

There has been little research conducted about how a lack of knowledge or awareness serves as a barrier to arts attendance. This makes sense, as it is difficult to gather information and draw conclusions about what people do not know. However, if a person is interested in attending arts events but does not know of any available arts offerings and is unable to find information about local organizations, their lack of knowledge acts as a constraint to their desired attendance. Further research is required to better understand how a lack of knowledge is a barrier to arts attendance.

In general, organizations have some semblance of control over real barriers to participation. Though levels of control vary, organizations can directly change how audiences experience real barriers. The easiest barrier to control is cost, as organizations can set and reset the price of admission readily. Additionally, organizations can plan and execute marketing campaigns to combat a lack of knowledge or awareness. Barriers that are more difficult to control are facilities and locations barriers, such as parking options, accessibility accomodations, hours of operation, and the dates and times of performances or programs. A notable exception to this idea is that organizations have no control over an interested non-participant's lack of time.

The second kind of barrier to arts participation is perceived barriers. While real barriers are objective and experienced the same by all, perceived barriers are subjective, individual factors that are uniquely experienced. There is much less literature regarding perceived barriers, as they are often anecdotal. Blume-Kohout, Leonard, and Novak-Leonard (2015) found that 21.6% of respondents reported that they didn't participate in the arts event because they could not find someone to go with (Blume-Kohout et al., 2015). Jun, Kyle, and O'Leary (2011) found

that interpersonal and intrapersonal factors such as feeling uncomfortable, health or safety concerns, lack of companionship, and childcare responsibilities were constraints to respondents' attendance at art museums (Jun et al., 2011).

The salience of perceived barriers is impacted by physical and mental disabilities that individuals experience. Fancourt and Mak (2020) found that "health appear[s] to act as a clear source of barriers to engaging in the arts." Individuals with physical health problems reported experiencing barriers related to their capability to attend arts events, while individuals with mental health problems reported experiencing more barriers related to their motivation to attend arts events (Fancourt and Mak, 2020). Collins et. al found that when participation for individuals with disabilities was only possible by addressing barriers on a case-by-case basis, "disabled audience members were often made to feel as though their presence was a burden" (Collins et al., 2021). Fancourt, Baxter, and Lorencatto (2021) reported that individuals suffering from depression and anxiety experienced barriers such as psychological incapabilities, lack of social opportunity, and lack of motivation to engage. They also found that these individuals would be more likely to participate in arts events if these barriers were addressed (Fancourt et al., 2021).

Socio-demographic factors also influence the experience of perceived barriers. The study also found that socio-demographic factors, including gender, age, income, number of children, and place of residence, interacted both with the experienced constraints as well as with other socio-demographic factors, indicating that members of more than one of these groups were more likely to experience constraints to participation (Jun et al., 2011). Furthermore, Kay, Wong, and Polonsky (2009) found through a series of in-depth interviews a lack of participation cannot be attributed to any one barrier or another, but rather a combination of both real and perceived

barriers. Instead, barriers to participation interact with each other to influence participation habits (Kay et al., 2009).

One particular social group that has been assessed for their experience of barriers to social and arts participation is older adults. In a study of roughly 200 participants aged 65-85, Dupuis (2022) found that despite a significant majority of respondents understanding the health and social benefits of the arts, over half reported being interested non-participants. Commonly reported barriers to participation include a lack of interest in the available programming and no one to attend events with (Dupuis, 2022). Despite the interest in learning how some age groups experience barriers, there has been little research conducted about how adults aged 18-24 experience barriers to arts participation.

Unlike real barriers, arts organizations have no control over perceived barriers to attendance. Because these constraints are uniquely and individually experienced, organizations can only respond to barriers by addressing them on a case-by-case basis. However, this is only possible if organizations know what kinds of perceived barriers their constituents face. Further research regarding the experience of perceived barriers should only be conducted on the community level, as unique social and environmental factors will create different perceived barriers for every constituent group.

2.3 Hypothesis

I hypothesize that primary real barriers to attendance that students at Bloomington face are a lack of knowledge, time, and location and facilities concerns. Given that the study is taking place on a college campus, where organizations offer discounted or free admission to students, cost will not be a prevalent barrier to attendance. Additionally, although real barriers to arts

attendance exist, the perceived barriers that students experience have a stronger influence on their attendance. Even if on-campus arts organizations address or remove the real barriers to attendance, students will not change their participation habits until the perceived barriers they experience are also addressed.

3. Methods

The purpose of this study is to analyze the real and perceived barriers to attendance at arts organizations. Data was collected through a self-administered online survey developed using Qualtrics software. Using thirteen on-campus arts organizations and the Indiana University student body as a case study, the survey gauged the experiences of the four primary real barriers to attendance and provided respondents with space to describe any perceived barriers they may have experienced.

A survey was the most efficient way to research barriers to arts attendance because it provided responses directly from the target population. Because the experience of barriers is subjective, hearing directly from respondents about their opinions and experiences was the best way to understand which barriers to attendance are commonly experienced.

3.1 Study Sample

The student body of Indiana University is representative of university-enrolled students in the state of Indiana. According to the 2021 Indiana University Transportation Demand Management Report, 85% of all students live within 2.5 miles of the campus, meaning that a significant majority of students live inside of or directly adjacent to the Indiana University campus community (2021 Report). A combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods were used to collect survey responses. A variety of collection methods were used to

send the survey to students, including posting flyers around campus, sending the survey link to professors and arts and culture organizations to share with students. The survey was published on January 21, 2024, and circulated for six weeks.

3.2 Included Arts Organizations

The 12 on-campus arts organizations included in the survey were: the African American Arts Institute, Eskenazi Museum of Art, First Thursdays Festivals, IU Arts and Humanities Council, IU Auditorium, IU Cinema, IU Department of Theatre, Drama, and Dance, IU Libraries, Jacobs School of Music, Lilly Library, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Union Board Films. If the study had been limited to the NEA's "benchmark" artistic disciplines, the list of included organizations would have been half as large. The expanded definition of "the arts" used in the study allowed for the inclusion of literary organizations such as IU Libraries and the Lilly Library, film organizations such as IU Cinema and Union Board Films, and cultural organizations including the IU Arts and Humanities Council and First Thursdays Festivals. This wide range of arts organizations and artistic disciplines were selected in order to understand how the experience of barriers varies between art forms. Additionally, the diverse range of arts organizations were selected with the goal of broadening survey sample and including as many respondents as possible.

3.3 Procedure and Design

The survey included a variety of closed- and open-ended questions, including multiple choice, Likert scale, matrix, and short answer questions. The survey underwent a pretesting phase of 10 students to ensure the coherence and quality of the questions included. Following this phase, the survey was shortened to minimize the risk of incomplete responses. Additionally,

a security question was added to the start of the survey to ensure that only students enrolled at IU-Bloomington completed it.

The survey was broken into six sections. The first four sections each focused on one of the four real barriers to attendance: lack of knowledge, cost, lack of time, and location and facilities concerns. Beginning with the knowledge barrier, respondents were asked about their current arts attendance habits, including how they found out about the organizations listed in the survey and why they attended events. This section also included questions about if respondents were interested in attending events that they ultimately did not. The second section assessed respondents' knowledge of the cost incentives that arts organizations offer and if those incentives had influenced attendance habits. The third section assessed respondents' opinions about their personal time constraints and organizational timing choices. The final section assessed respondents' opinions about facilities and location factors. This section included questions about parking and location concerns as well as accessibility accommodations. Each section included a hypothetical question to assess how respondents would alter their attendance habits if the barrier in question was addressed. Additionally, each section ended with a Likert-scale question that assessed if the factor is a barrier to respondent attendance at arts events.

The fifth section provided respondents with space to describe any other constraints to attendance they may have experienced. This short answer question was optional. This section was designed to assess perceived barriers to attendance that respondents may have experienced.

The final section of the survey included demographic questions to help identify patterns in the responses and to compare for representation of the sample. The demographics section included questions about year in school, school enrollment within IU, race, and gender identity.

3.4 Analytics

Using the results from the survey, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and summarizations of the dataset. Additionally, using Qualtrics' crosstab functions, questions were compared alongside demographic questions. Understanding which barriers to attending arts events are more prevalent than others allowed for conclusions to be drawn about how arts organizations can begin to address constraints to student attendance. Analysis can also help to highlight which barriers to attendance are more salient for different demographic groups.

3.5 Limitations

A primary limitation in the data collection lies in the sampling method. Because several arts organizations and professors distributed the survey to their students, the survey reached many students already involved with various on-campus arts organizations. It was difficult to reach students who have no current arts participation and encourage them to complete the survey. To combat this limitation, a drawing to win an Amazon gift card was included at the end of the survey in order to attract respondents.

Another limitation of the study was due to the nature of a self-administered web survey. Respondents may have felt uncomfortable sharing any perceived barriers they may have experienced. Additionally, it is safe to assume that respondents do not have an extensive understanding of barriers to attendance, so they may not have known how to describe perceived barriers to attendance. There was no real way to combat this limitation.

A final limitation of the survey came out of respect for student respondents' comfort with answering questions. Except for the security question at the beginning of the survey, all of the questions were optional. Unfortunately, this means that not every question was answered by

every respondent. To combat this, data will be analyzed with question-specific totals as opposed to survey-specific totals.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Demographics

During the six-week circulation period, the survey garnered 523 total responses. Because 24 respondents failed the security question, 484 respondents advanced to take the rest of the survey. The sample's breakdown according to racial identification was consistent with university-wide racial demographics, with a majority of respondents identifying as white (Figure 4.1). There was a slight overrepresentation of female respondents (Figure 4.2). Responses across year in school were fairly equal (Figure 4.3). Consistent with IU enrollment statistics, respondents primarily attend the College of Arts and Sciences, O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and Kelley School of Business. No other school accounted for more than 5% of responses (Figure 4.4).

4.2 Current Arts Participation Patterns

A substantial proportion of respondents reported on-campus arts activity. 87.9% of respondents recorded that they had attended an arts event at one of the selected organizations in the last 12 months. The most popular arts organizations were First Thursdays Festivals (66.3% of respondents reported attendance), IU Auditorium (60.0%), Eskenazi Museum of Art (37.6%), Jacobs School of Music (35.7%), and the Department of Theatre, Drama, and Dance (33.2%). Between 10-30% of respondents reported attendance at IU Libraries, IU Cinema, Lilly Library, Union Board Films, and the IU Arts and Humanities Council. Fewer than 5% of respondents

reported attendance at the African American Arts Institute or at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Figure 4.5).

9% of survey respondents had attended arts events at organizations not listed in the survey. These organizations include student organizations such as a-capella groups Resting Pitch Face and Ladies First, Boy in the Bubble comedy troupe, University Players, and Music Industry Creatives.

In order to understand what motivates students to attend arts events, survey respondents were asked to select the reasons for their arts attendance. The most prevalent reasons for attendance were interest in the specific event or performance (25.6% of responses) or interest in the art form (20.7%). The second most popular reason for attendance was "something to do," with 17.9% of respondents selecting this option. Social reasons such as supporting a friend or family member (12.5%) or accompanying a friend (10.6%) were also reported. 11.3% of respondents attended an arts event for a class grade. 1.5% of participants attended arts events for other reasons, which include working, volunteering, or performing at the event (Figure 4.6).

To test for interested non-participation in arts events on campus, respondents were asked if there was an arts event in the last 12 months that they had been interested in attending, but ultimately did not. 77.6% of survey participants responded positively to this question.

4.3 Experience of Real Barriers

To understand students' knowledge of on-campus arts organizations and offerings, students were asked to identify which of the listed arts organizations they had heard of prior to taking the survey. A substantial majority of respondents had previous knowledge of nearly every listed organization. Over 70% of participants reported awareness of the Eskenazi Museum of Art,

IU Auditorium, IU Cinema, IU Department of Theatre, Drama, and Dance, First Thursdays Festivals, IU Libraries, Lilly Library, and Jacobs School of Music. Between 40-50% of respondents were aware of the African American Arts Institute, Arts and Humanities Council, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Union Board Films. Students were then asked how they had heard of the listed organizations. The most popular entry points were official IU communications (80.5% of respondents selected this option), social media (70.1%), and seeing a posted advertisement on the campus (68.9%). Other entry points include word of mouth from a friend or family member (51.7%) and the IU Involvement Fair (46.9%). 11.1% of respondents chose to specify other entry points, which include working or studying within a listed organization, hearing about them through classes, or seeing them around the campus (Figure 4.7).

To understand if a lack of knowledge serves as a prevalent barrier to arts attendance, students were asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "Overall, I would attend more arts events if I knew they were happening." 88% of survey participants responded positively to this statement (Figure 4.8).

To understand if students are aware of the free and discounted admission offered at all on-campus arts organizations, a matrix question was included in the survey. Respondents were asked to select "True" or "False" after reading a statement about each listed organization's student admission policy. Of the eight most well-known organizations, students were most aware of the Eskenazi Museum, First Thursdays, and IU Auditorium cost incentives, with at least 80% of respondents reporting awareness of the free or discounted admission. Between 55-75% of respondents were aware of the cost incentives offered by IU Cinema, IU Department of Theatre, Drama, and Dance, IU Libraries, Lilly Library, and Jacobs School of Music. The other four

organizations varied broadly in terms of cost incentive awareness. While 72.4% of participants were aware that IU Arts and Humanities Council events are free to attend, only 24.2% knew that the African American Arts Institute offered discounted tickets to students (Figure 4.9).

To understand how these cost incentives influence students' attendance habits, respondents were asked how knowledge of cost incentives impacted their attendance at an art event. Of the respondents who answered "true" to any of the statements in the matrix table, 50.8% reported that the knowledge of cost incentives convinced them to attend a performance or exhibit, while 38.6% were more inclined to attend. Of the respondents who answered "false" to any of the statements, 20.2% reported that they had been convinced to attend an arts offering in the near future, and 62.3% were more inclined to attend.

Students were then asked how their attendance would change if any of the listed arts organizations began to offer free admission instead of discounted tickets. 70.2% of participants responded that they would absolutely attend an arts event if the admission was free as opposed to discounted, and 28.4% would consider it.

To understand if cost serves as a barrier to student attendance, survey participants were asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "I would attend more arts events if they did not cost as much." 84.5% of participants responded positively to this statement (Figure 4.10).

Questions designed to gauge the experience of the time barrier were split into two groupings. The first group dealt with students' personal time constraints. Survey participants were asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "I am too busy with work, school, or extracurricular activities to attend arts events on campus." While

only 22.7% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 56.4% somewhat agreed. Additionally, students were asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "If I had more free time, I would consider attending an arts offering on campus." Of the 377 respondents that answered this question, only 10 responded negatively to this statement. 90.72% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed.

The second group of questions about the time barrier regarded organizational timing factors such as hours of operation and performance dates and times. Survey participants were asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "If on-campus arts organizations offered more performances or events on weekends, I would consider attending an arts offering." 32.1% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and 44.03% somewhat agreed. Students were then asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "If on-campus arts organizations had longer or more convenient hours of operation, I would consider attending an arts offering. 68.7% of participants responded positively to this statement.

To understand if time serves as a barrier to attending arts offerings, respondents were asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "Overall, I consider a lack of time a barrier to my attendance." 82.82% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with this statement (Figure 4.11).

Questions designed to understand the facilities and location barrier to attending arts events included three primary aspects: parking, accessibility accommodations, and location. To understand how parking may serve as a constraint to attendance, students were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have chosen not to attend an arts offering on campus because of a lack of sufficient parking options." 63.5% of respondents disagreed. Students were

then asked if they have refrained from attending an arts offering due to a lack of sufficient accessibility options such as wheelchair ramps or visual/hearing aids. 95.3% of participants disagreed. Students were then asked if they have refrained from attending an arts offering because they were unable to locate or find directions to the facility. 76.3% of respondents disagreed. When asked if they would consider attending an arts offering if their facilities considerations were addressed, 40.5% of respondents would absolutely attend an event and 51.7% would consider it.

To understand if facilities and locations concerns serve as a barrier to attending arts events, students were asked to select their agreement level on a Likert scale with the following statement: "Overall, I would attend more arts events if my location and facilities concerns were addressed." While 41.9% of respondents somewhat agreed, 33.51% responded neutrally to the statement (Figure 4.12).

The experience of barriers was roughly the same across race, gender, year, and school identifications. Some of these identification groups were too small to make robust comparisons about the experience of barriers. For example, only two survey respondents identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, so there was not enough data to compare their experience amongst other racial groups. Additionally, schools such as the Luddy School of Informatics and the School of Education were represented by 15 or fewer survey participants.

4.4 Experience of Perceived Barriers

To understand if any barriers not discussed on the survey that students experienced, participants were asked if there were any other considerations that kept them from attending an arts offering (Figure 4.13). While 89.5% of respondents answered "no," the 39 respondents who

answered "yes" could elaborate on those considerations in the subsequent short answer question. Answers to this question were roughly similar across race, gender, year, and school identifications. While each of the responses to this question were unique, three primary groupings of responses arose. 20% of the responses concerned a lack of information about events, including being unable to access details about the event or having difficulty locating the event. 20% of the responses were about social factors. The majority of the responses regarding social factors were about participants' unwillingness to attend events alone. Finally, 18% of the responses concerned transportation issues, including being unable to find transportation to or from the event or bus routes not running late enough. Additionally, some respondents were unwilling to walk home from events in the dark.

5. Discussion

The objective of collecting data about barriers to arts attendance is to obtain a deeper understanding of interested non-participants. Knowing what factors are most prevalent in constraining their attendance at arts events will help arts administrators and organizations to address and break down barriers to create deeper connections with audiences and more inclusive organizations.

5.1 Primary Barriers to Participation

Despite highly reported awareness of on-campus arts organizations, a lack of knowledge was the most prevalently experienced barrier to participation. A possible explanation for this disconnect lies in the wording of the survey questions. While students were asked to report awareness of arts organizations, the question gauging the experience of barriers referred to

individual arts events. The implication is that knowledge of an organization's awareness does not translate to knowledge of arts offerings.

Although it was hypothesized that cost would not be a barrier to attending arts events, given that all of the included arts organizations offered free or discounted admission to students, cost was another prevalently experienced barrier. Some survey participants felt so strongly about this barrier that they used the space at the end of the survey to further elaborate. One respondent wrote that even with the offered discount, tickets to an event at the IU Auditorium were over $30. "If things were cheaper, I would definitely go see more." Factors that compound the cost of attendance, such as the cost of transportation or the processing fees associated with purchasing tickets online through Ticketmaster, likely increase the impact of the cost barrier. For example, student tickets to all events at the Jacobs School of Music are $10. Ticketmaster's $8 processing fee essentially doubles the cost of admission. The substantial proportion of respondents that responded positively to the hypothetical question demonstrates that despite the discounted admission, the cost of attending arts offerings is a primary constraint for students.

It is possible that on-campus arts organizations are not interested in addressing the cost barrier, as many rely on ticket sales as a key part of their revenue stream. However, if arts organizations on the IU campus wish to increase the number of students attending their programming, a possible means of addressing this barrier is creating steeper student discounts or offering free admission to students.

The knowledge and cost barriers interact with each other in interesting ways. Three of the organizations with the highest levels of reported awareness, Eskenazi Museum of Art, IU Auditorium, and First Thursdays Festivals, also had the highest levels of reported awareness of

cost incentives. Respondents who were aware of the arts organizations in the survey were more likely to also be aware of the cost incentives offered.

Despite the prevalence of cost as a barrier to attendance, the existence of cost incentives is not necessarily a motivator. Awareness of the cost incentives offered by arts organizations does not directly translate to changes in attendance habits. While some respondents who were not previously aware of existing cost incentives were convinced to attend an arts offering in the near future, a majority of respondents reported that the knowledge merely made them more inclined to consider attending an event. If organizations would like to increase the number of students attending arts events, further steps beyond simply making students aware of available cost incentive are necessary. In their marketing to students, organizations must emphasize additional benefits of attendance. Because the most popular reason for respondent attendance was interest in the specific art form, organizational communication can rely on the unique aspects of their programming and artistic discipline to attract increased student attendance.

Of the two aspects of the time barrier, personal time constraints and organizational timing factors, personal time constraints served as more prevalent barrier to survey respondents. Because organizations have no control over audiences' personal time constraints, they can only find alternate ways to connect with students experiencing this barrier. Although some survey respondents reported that organizational changes such as more convenient hours of operation or increased events and performances on weekends may impact their attendance habits, organizations will always compete with coursework, jobs, and extracurricular activities for students' time and attendance. If arts organizations wish to connect more meaningfully with students, a possible means of addressing the personal time barrier is finding alternate avenues of connection to work into students' lives.

5.2 Less Prevalent Barriers to Participation

Facilities and location concerns do not serve as a significant barrier to arts participation. However, some of the factors encompassed in this barrier such as accessibility accommodations may not be required by all of the survey participants. Due to privacy concerns, information regarding the number of students on the IU-Bloomington campus who require accessibility accommodations is not available. Without this contextualization data, it is difficult to understand if students who require accessibility accommodations are constrained by a lack of them. To understand how this survey data is representative of IU students with accessibility needs, further research is needed.

Although a majority of respondents were not constrained by a lack of parking options, other constraints regarding transportation arose in the short answer section of the survey. One participant wrote, "my bus route has limited hours that end pretty early in the evening and I can't miss it." Other students cited safety concerns with walking home after events that end once the sun has set. On-campus arts organizations cannot control the experience of this barrier. A possible means of addressing this barrier is to work together with bus companies such as the IU Campus Bus Service and Bloomington Transit to create bus routes that run in the evenings after performances have finished.

Although it was hypothesized that perceived barriers would have a stronger influence on student attendance levels, a significant majority of survey respondents did report experiencing other barriers to attendance. A possible explanation is that, given the nature of the data collection through a web-administered survey, some respondents did not feel comfortable sharing barriers to attendance that they might have experienced. However, a lack of reported perceived barriers to attendance does not mean that they do not exist, or that survey respondents do not experience

them. If on-campus arts organizations wish to create more meaningful connections with students, understanding the personal and social factors that constrain their attendance is a key component of increasing student engagement and attendance levels. This understanding must happen through in-depth and intentional qualitative research efforts that are not constrained by the limitations of a web-administered survey.

5.3 Limitations

Overall, the study sample is not representative of typical arts-going adults in the United States. There was a 35-point difference between the number of adults who reported arts attendance in the 2022 SPPA (52%) and the survey for this research thesis (87.9%). It is likely that, in the distribution efforts, the survey reached IU students who may already be inclined to attend arts offerings. However, respondents' opinions and experiences about the barriers they have experienced will give arts organizations valuable insight into how they can create better connections with students.

Although the literature suggests that barriers to participation interact with sociodemographic factors such as race and gender (Jun et al. 2011, Kay et al. 2009), the survey did not reflect that respondents experienced barriers differently bad on race, gender, year in school, or school enrollment. A possible explanation for this deviation from the literature is that minority students who do experience barriers more saliently were not reached in survey distribution efforts. Another possible explanation is that the diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts made by Indiana University and the listed campus arts organizations have helped to eliminate or reduce the barriers experienced only by minority students. Further research focused on the IU campus community is required to understand how women and students of color experience barriers to participation.

6. Conclusion

Arts organizations, both on college campuses and in the wider world, must understand the factors that bar interested non-participants from attending programs and performances if they would like to create connections with new audiences. While understanding these factors is a key step of the process, organizations must also act to address and remove these barriers.

This study shows that, despite some efforts on the part of IU campus arts organizations to reduce or eliminate barriers to attendance, students still experience barriers such as a lack of knowledge, cost, and a lack of time. Organizations that wish to foster better connections with students and increase the number of students attending their events must take steps to understand these barriers and work to eliminate them.

Further research is required to understand how these barriers are experienced by adults aged 18-24 who do not reside in or near a college campus. University life comes with a unique set of community and environmental factors that are not replicated in any other living community. While the results of this study may provide some insight about barriers to participation for arts organizations that do not reside within a university, further study is required to understand how these barriers are experienced once students graduate and leave campus.

Further study as to how barriers to attendance at other cultural and leisure activities, such as athletic events, could help to further contextualize the experience of barriers. If young adults interested in sporting events experience the same barriers as their peers interested in arts offerings, then the two industries could work together to share possible solutions to address and remove barriers to cultural attendance.

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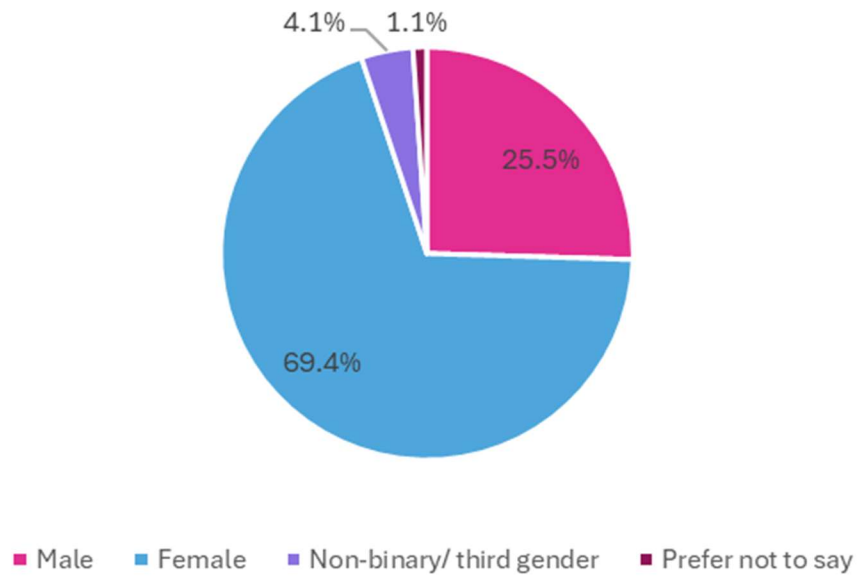
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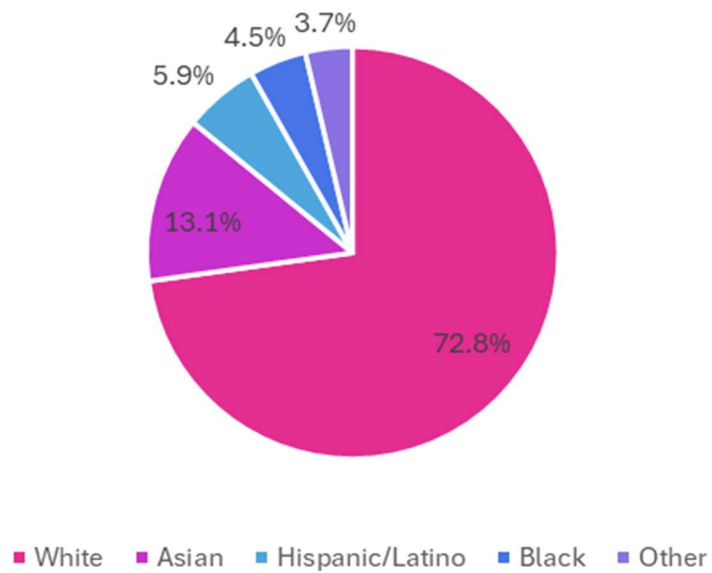Research. *Health Promotion Practice*. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248399231183388

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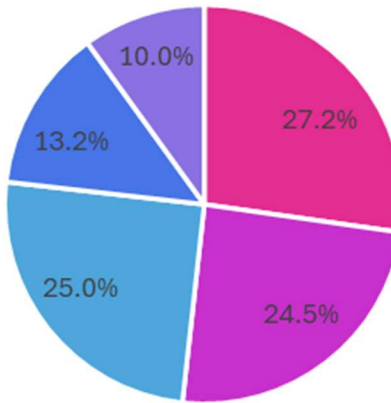West, J. (1987). *Public Participation in the Arts: Demand and Barriers*. Distributed by ERIC

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**Appendix**

4.1: Sample Breakdown by Gender

- 25.5% Male
- 69.4% Female
- 4.1% Non-binary/ third gender
- 1.1% Prefer not to say

Male ■ Female ■ Non-binary/ third gender ■ Prefer not to say

4.2: Sample Breakdown by Race

- 72.8% White
- 13.1% Asian
- 5.9% Hispanic/Latino
- 4.5% Black
- 3.7% Other

■ White ■ Asian ■ Hispanic/Latino ■ Black ■ Other

4.3: Sample Breakdown by Year in School

- Freshman: 27.2%
- Sophomore: 24.5%
- Junior: 25.0%
- Senior: 13.2%
- Graduate Student: 10.0%

4.4: Sample Breakdown by School Enrollment
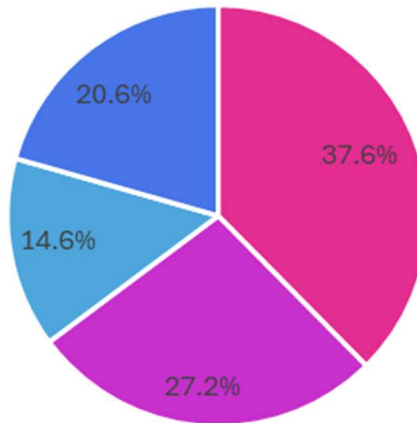
- College of Arts and Sciences: 37.6%
- O'Neill School (SPEA): 27.2%
- Kelley School of Business: 14.6%
- Other: 20.6%

4.5: Reported Attendance at On-Campus Arts Organizations

Organization	Percentage
First Thursdays Festivals	66.29%
IU Auditorium	58.99%
Eskenazi Museum	37.64%
acobs School of Music	35.67%
IU Department of Theater, Drama, and Dance	33.15%
IU Libraries	29.49%
IU Cinema	19.94%
Lilly Library	17.70%
Union Board Films	11.80%
U Arts and Humanities Council	10.39%
African American Arts Institute	4.21%
luseum of Archaeology and Anthropology	4.21%

0.00%   10.00%   20.00%   30.00%   40.00%   50.00%   60.00%   70.00%   80.00%   90.00%   100.00%

4.6: Reported Motivations for Arts Attenance

- Interest in the art form
- Interest in the specific event or performance
- To support a friend or family member
- For a class grade
- A friend asked me to accompany them
- Something to do
- Other
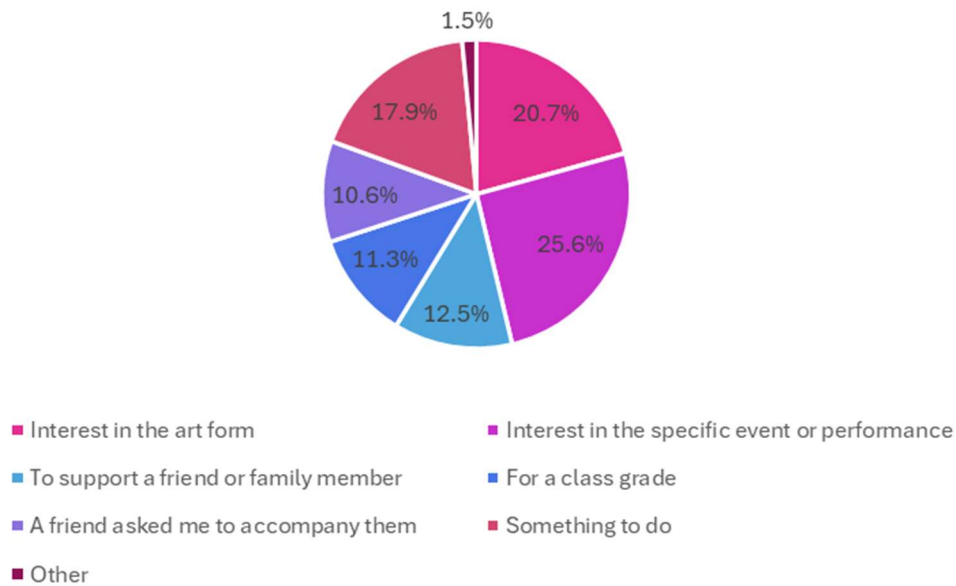
4.7: Reported Entry Points to On-Campus Arts Organizations
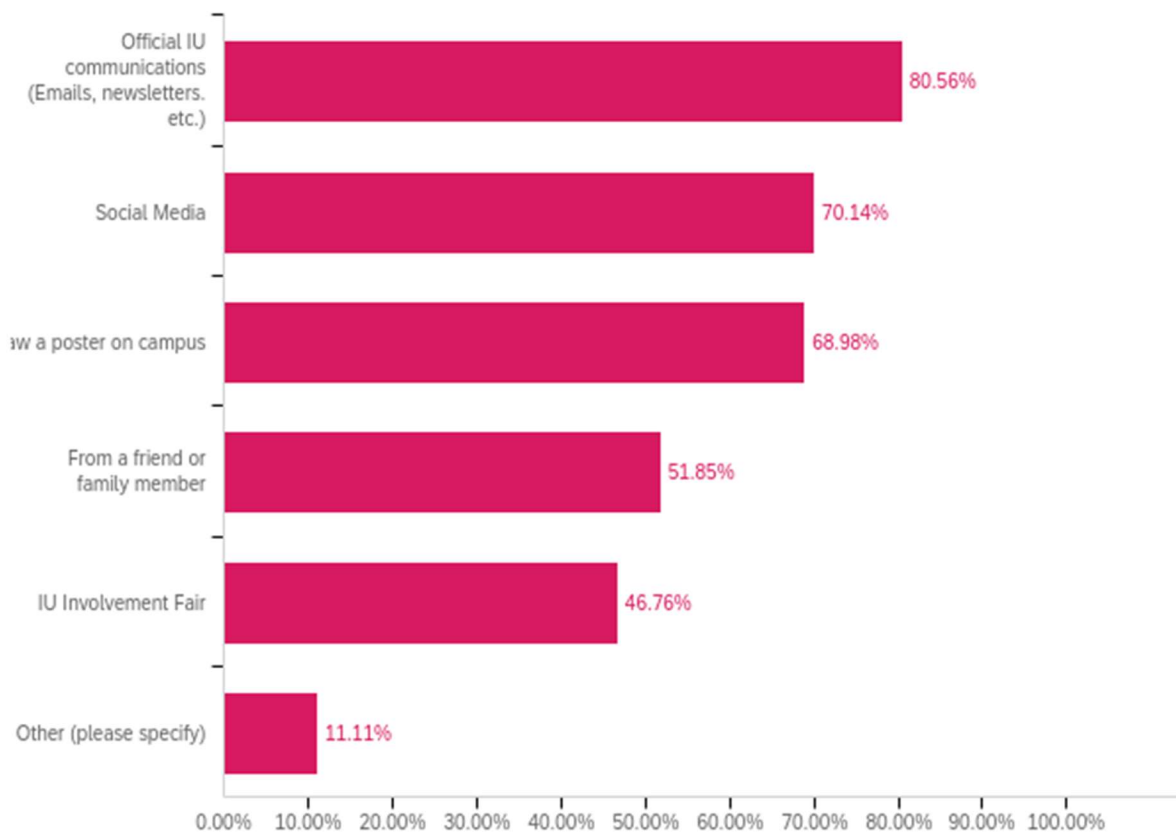
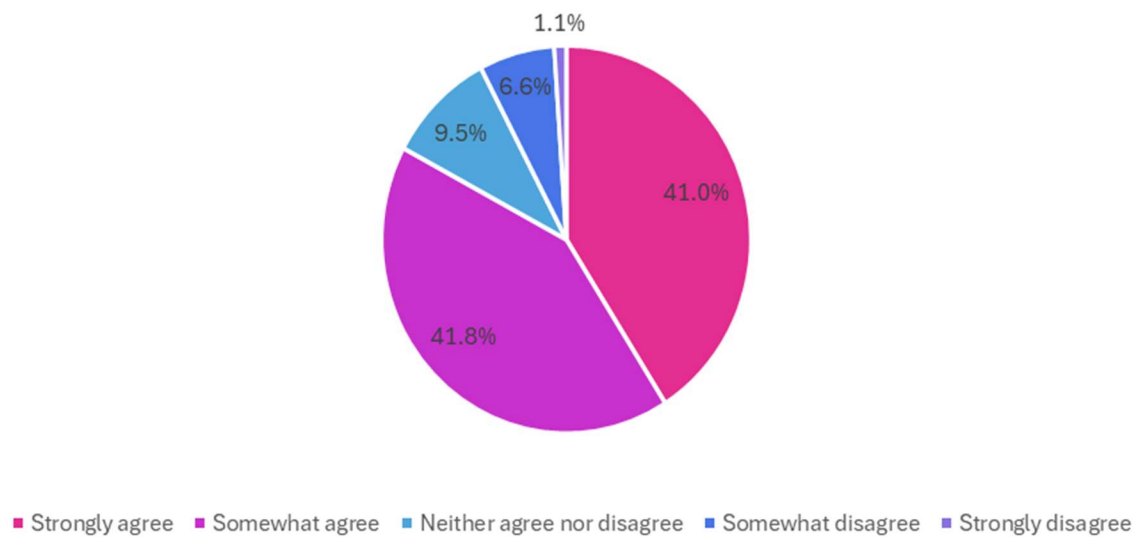## 4.8: Percentage of Respondents who Agree that Knowledge is a Barrier to Attendance

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
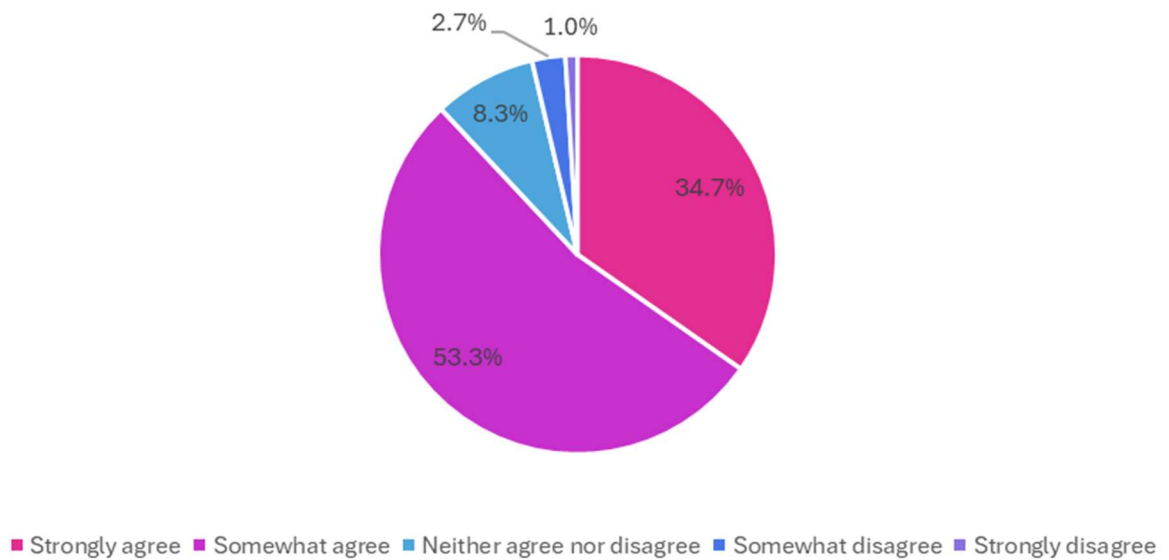
4.9: Sample Breakdown by Knowledge of Cost Incentives

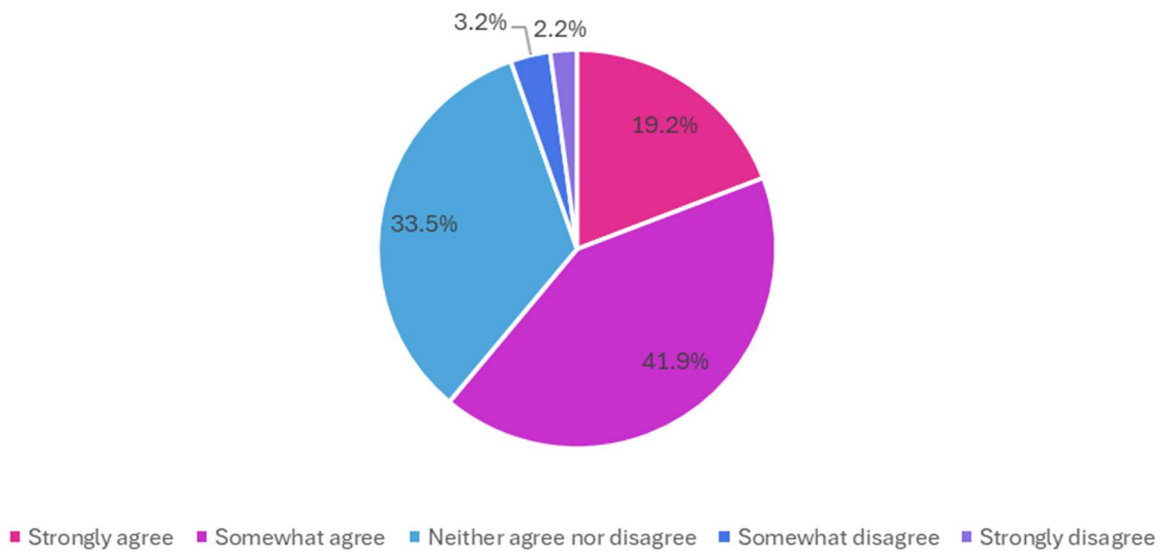| #	Field	True		False		Total
2	Admission to the Eskenazi Museum of Art is free.	86.15%	342	13.85%	55	397
3	First Thursdays Festivals are free to attend.	88.94%	354	11.06%	44	398
4	IU Arts and Humanities Council events, including First Thursdays, are free for students.	72.47%	287	27.53%	109	396
5	IU Auditorium offers discounted tickets for students.	83.33%	330	16.67%	66	396
6	IU Cinema offers discounted tickets for students.	63.54%	251	36.46%	144	395
7	IU Department of Theatre, Drama, and Dance offers discounted tickets for students.	56.31%	223	43.69%	173	396
8	IU Libraries' exhibitions and collections are free for students.	76.26%	302	23.74%	94	396
9	Jacobs School of Music offers discounted tickets for students.	58.73%	232	41.27%	163	395
1	The African American Arts Institute offers discounted tickets for students.	24.18%	96	75.82%	301	397
10	The Lilly Library's collections and exhibitions are free for students.	70.71%	280	29.29%	116	396
11	The collections and exhibitions at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology are free for students.	41.67%	165	58.33%	231	396
12	Union Board Films events are free for students.	55.19%	218	44.81%	177	395

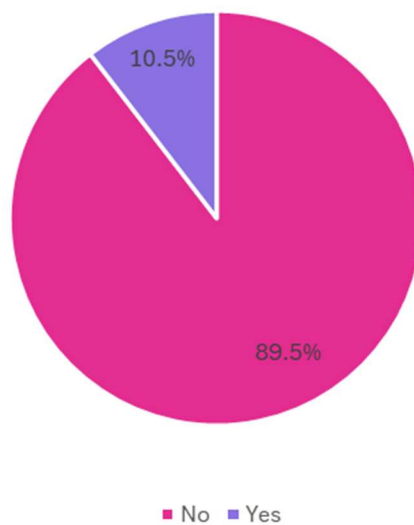4.10: Percentage of Respondents who Agree that Cost is a Barrier to Attendance

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree
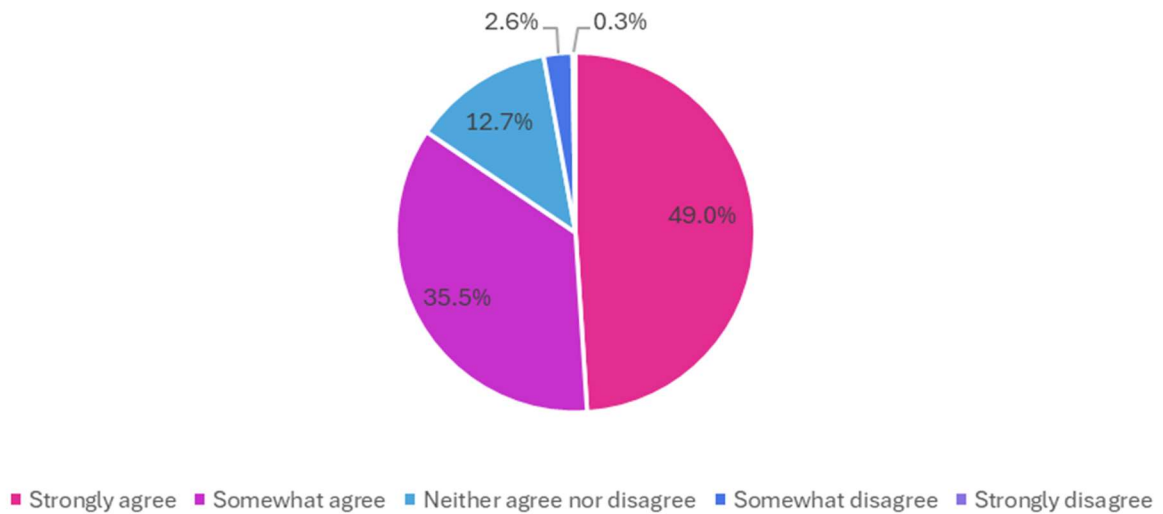
4.11: Percentage of Respondents who Agree that Time is a Barrier to Attendance

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

4.12: Percentage of Respondents who Agree that Facilities/Location are a Barrier to Attendance

3.2% 2.2%
19.2%
33.5%
41.9%

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

4.13: Percentage of Respondents who Reported Experience of Perceived Barrier

10.5%
89.5%

■ No ■ Yes

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