# Arts participation survey shows positive outlook for people with disability, however with more research needed.

The results of a national arts participation survey indicate an increase of people with disability accessing the arts1. However, detailed research is needed to fully understand the picture for people with disability, according to disability and art peak bodies Arts Access Australia and Accessible Arts NSW.

‘**Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey’**is the third in a series by the Australia Council for the Arts, following editions in 2009 and 2013. It measures Australians’ engagement with the arts in 2016 – attending arts events, exhibitions and festivals; reading; listening to music; sharing and connecting with the arts online; and creating art themselves.    
  
7,537 Australians took part in the research, with 15% identifying as having disability. Key findings from the report around disability in the arts include:

* While creative participation has remained steady among the Australian population it has increased among people with disability. Among people with disability, creative participation in the arts increased 14 percentage points between 2009 and 2013, and a further 12 percentage points between 2013 and 2016 (from 35% of respondents with disability in 2009 to 49% in 2013, and 61% in 2016). Respondents with disability are now more likely to create art (61%) than survey respondents without disability (44%). This is the case for all art forms.
* Compared to respondents without disability, respondents with disability are now more likely to attend dance, theatre, visual arts and literature events.
* Among respondents with disability, arts attendance increased 12 percentage points between 2013 and 2016, from 61% to 73%, following a stable trend between 2009 and 2013.
* Respondents with disability are more likely to attend festivals (51%) than those without disability (44%).

Meagan Shand CEO of Arts Access Australia congratulated the Australia Council on its commitment to research and inclusion of people with disability on the report.

“It is wonderful to see the positive participation rates for people with disability in arts and culture, it is a reflection of the hard work and commitment of our member organisations,” she says.

Ms Shand adds that the statistics in this report are indicative and can only be used as a guide. “We know some people with disability still face significant barriers to participating in arts and culture and the details have not been captured in this report. More targeted research is required to paint a comprehensive picture of participation in arts for people with disability, and Arts Access Australia would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council to focus in on the details of access.”

Morwenna Collett, CEO at Accessible Arts, also commended the Australia Council on this comprehensive report.

“It is pleasing to see survey results that aim to reflect the diversity of Australian society – 15% of survey respondents, compared to 18.3% of the current Australian population, identify with disability.”

While trends are heading in a positive direction in relation to participation, Accessible Arts is acutely aware that work is required for artists with disability to have equal access to platforms for their work. “Accessible Arts is currently conducting a major sector consultation project, to hear about the current needs of the arts and disability sector. So far, we are seeing gaps in relation to employment and career development opportunities, which we’d like to continue working with the sector to address.”

Other key findings in the report include:

* Engagement with First Nations arts has doubled since 2009, reaching 7 million Australians last year - double the number since the first survey in 2009.
* 98% of Australians engage with the arts and since the 2013 survey there is substantially increased recognition of their positive impact on our wellbeing and ability to develop new ideas.
* Younger Australians (aged 15-24 years) create and experience the arts at the highest rates.

Read the full report on the [Australia Council for the Arts](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/connecting-australians/) website.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Accessible Arts provides leadership in arts and disability through information, advocacy and the facilitation of excellence in arts practice. Contact [Jane Easton](mailto:jeaston@aarts.net.au), Marketing and Communications Manager on 02 9251 6499

Arts Access Australia, the national body for arts and disability, works to increase opportunities and access for people with disability as artists, arts-workers, participants and audiences.