

## FOCUS

Research Findings

# Arts, Culture and Californians

*Charting Arts Participation and  
Organizations in a Vast, Diverse State*

Highlights from the report, *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology*

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## Foreword

The James Irvine Foundation is deeply committed to the arts in California, as we have been since our founding in 1937. This commitment leads us to seek, and share, new insights into the role of arts in the lives of Californians. In this context, we engaged Markusen Economic Research to study the ecology of arts, culture and Californians.

This report presents highlights from the Markusen team's substantive body of research compiled from a range of available sources, including information from the California Cultural Data Project, the Urban Institute's Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy, and the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. The research describes Californian's avid arts participation and the variety and abundance of our arts and culture organizations.

I encourage you to use this report to increase your understanding of arts engagement: Consider the many ways Californians are participating in the arts, notice the distinctions of their participation across California's regions and make comparisons between what we experience here against the national data provided.

Those of us working in the field can attest to the powerful contribution of the arts to our collective civic and social life. Our challenge as a sector is to raise the level of arts engagement far above what the data now reflect. In helping us more fully understand arts participation, this report and other studies like it offer context and information to effectively take on that challenge.

While this report breaks new ground in our understanding of arts participation, we recognize that it is just a beginning as we all aim to further understand the rich and diverse ways that Californians participate in the arts. As you may know, the Irvine Foundation recently announced refinements to our Arts grantmaking strategy, with a new goal of promoting engagement in the arts for all Californians. In that context, we look forward to learning from others as we all seek to adapt to the ongoing demographic and technological changes that affect how and where Californians participate in the arts.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to the Markusen Economic Research team for authoring this one-of-a-kind report and for their partnership throughout the process. The report also would not have been possible without the wise counsel and support of the California Cultural Data Project Working Group and our Virtual Advisory Committee members: Angie Kim, Sunil Iyengar, John Kreidler, Cora Mirikitani, Frances Phillips and Steven Tepper. And finally, I express my appreciation to all of the nonprofit organizations that contributed information that made this report possible. You are the people and organizations providing the opportunities for Californians to participate in the arts, so without you, none of this would be relevant. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with you as we all navigate the changing landscape and new opportunities in the arts.

Sincerely,



**Josephine Ramirez**  
Arts Program Director  
The James Irvine Foundation  
September 2011

## Introduction

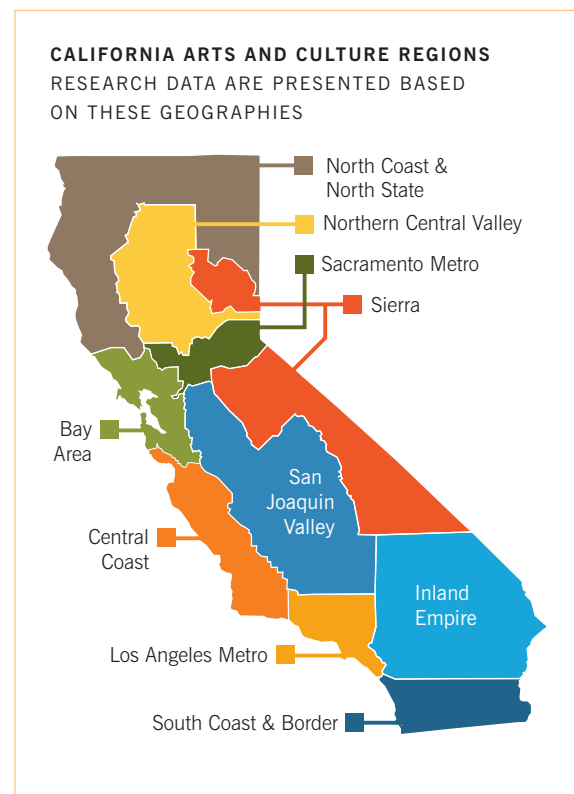
**ARTS AND CULTURE** plays a significant role in the daily lives of Californians. The state is noteworthy for the avid participation of its people, the diversity and abundance of its arts organizations and the varied regional characteristics of its arts sector. California's regions reflect distinctive populations, participation rates, numbers and types of arts and culture organizations, and levels of arts funding.

These points are drawn from a new report, *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology*, created by Markusen Economic Research for The James Irvine Foundation. The report is based on data gathered from multiple sources describing the California arts and culture sector and public involvement, and includes a detailed technical appendix. Access the full research at [www.irvine.org/ArtsEcology](http://www.irvine.org/ArtsEcology).

Presented here in highlight form, this information is intended to guide the approaches of arts and culture leaders, funders and policymakers. It invites further investigation by interested researchers, and offers Californians deeper understanding of how they and their communities fit into the state's arts and culture ecology. Plus, it encourages the growing practice of integrating arts into initiatives in education, housing, health care and other areas of community well-being.

The research featured here affirms, and extends well beyond, the economic benefits of arts and culture. It sheds new light on the role of this sector in the lives of Californians, illustrating its significance to people and communities throughout the nation's most-populated and diverse state.

**A note on participation.** As new data sets and measures become available, future studies can more fully describe participation by including emerging ways people experience arts and culture, for example, through digital technology and via online communities. They may also further distinguish forms of deep engagement; for example, making art and practicing cultural traditions, versus attending events or exhibits.



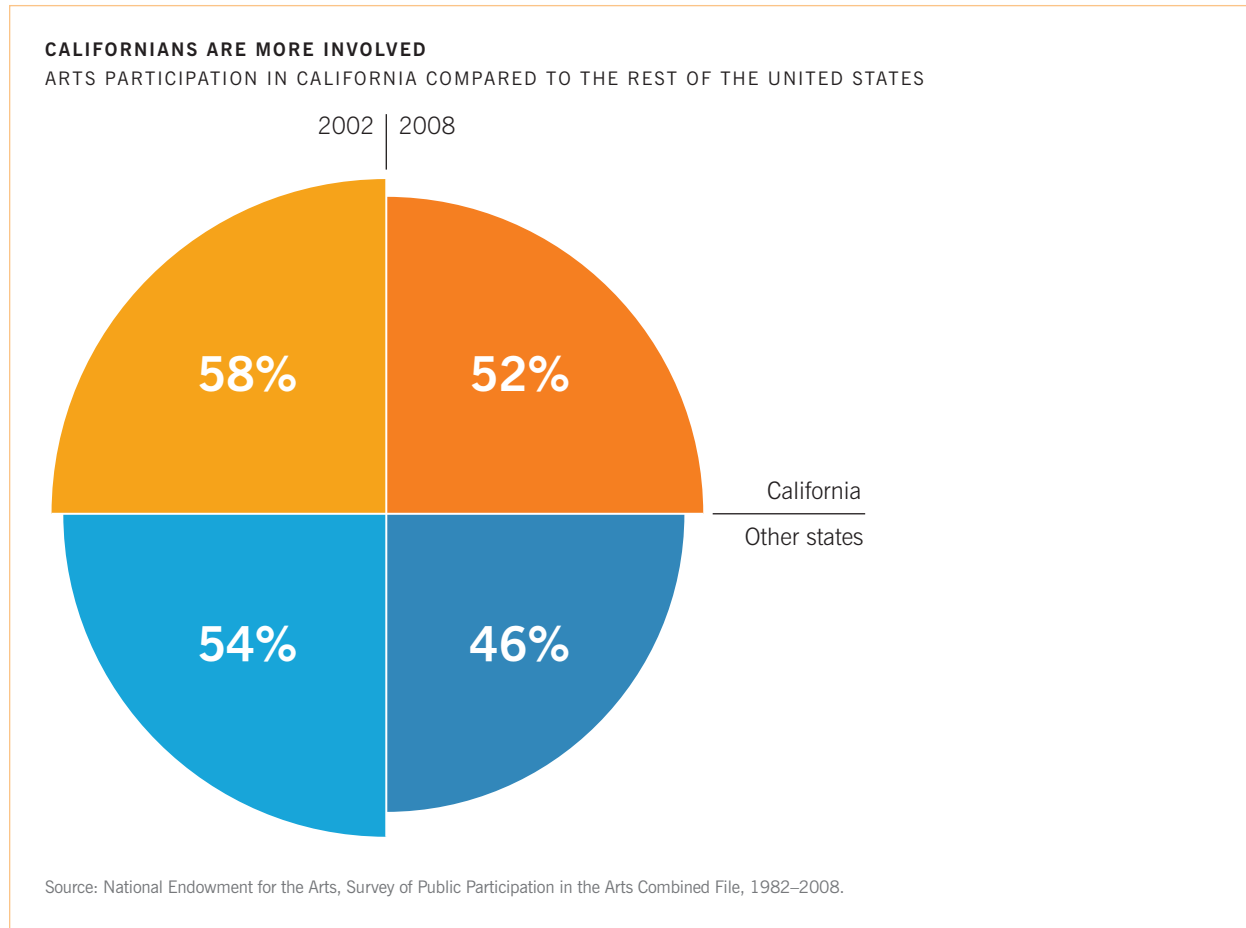
AVID PARTICIPATION

# Arts and culture is alive in California

Californians enthusiastically create, organize and nurture one of the world’s most rich and robust arts and cultural ecologies. They preserve traditions and unveil new, cutting-edge artwork. As artists, cultural leaders, community-builders and arts lovers, they shape organizations that nurse creativity from conception through production, presentation and participation.

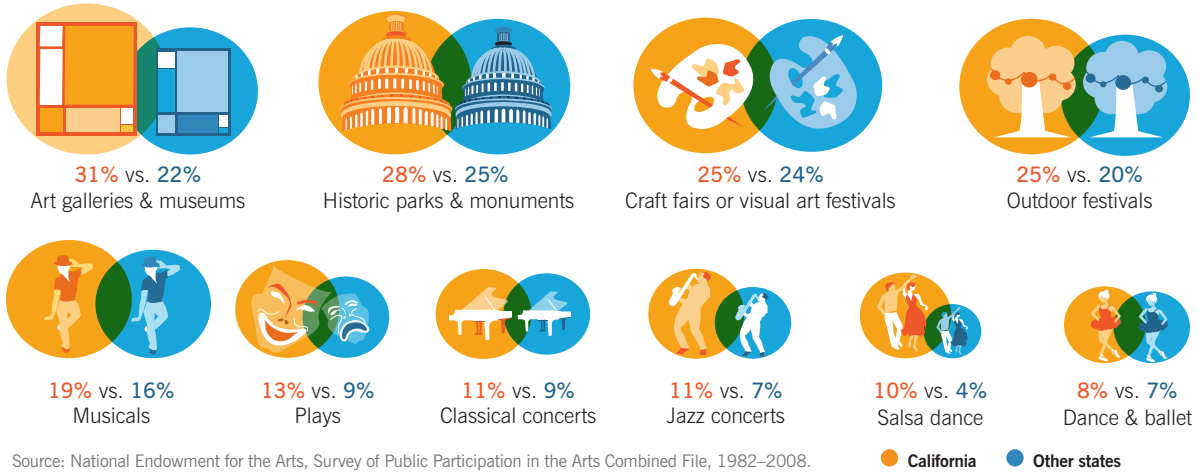
**People participate in arts and culture often in California.** High arts and culture participation rates set California apart from the rest of the country. In 2008, 52 percent of Californians over the age of 18 attended at least one arts event compared to 46 percent in other states. In that year, more than 14 million California adults reported participating in arts and cultural events in or outside the state. The state’s nonprofits report that Californians and visitors, including children, participate in their arts and cultural offerings an estimated 137 million times each year.

Arts and culture participation declined nationally from 2002 to 2008, but participation among California adults dropped only 6 percentage points compared to 8 points for other American adults. The chart below illustrates participation levels for adults in and outside of California; note that these data exclude attendance at festivals to ensure consistency across the two years shown.



**HOW CALIFORNIANS COMPARE**

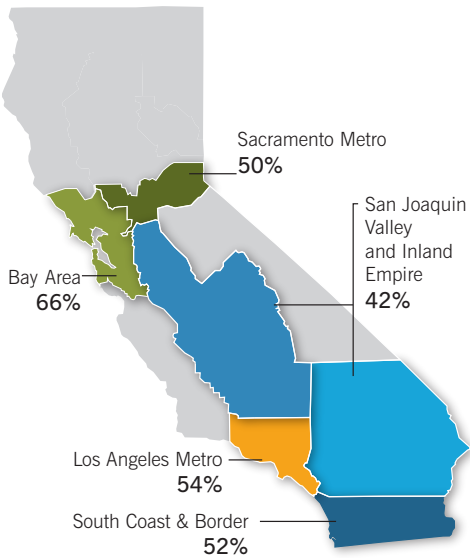
PARTICIPATION RATES BY ARTS AND CULTURE CATEGORY, CALIFORNIA AND REST OF THE UNITED STATES, 2008



Salsa dance, jazz concerts, plays, art galleries and museums are particular favorites for Californians. As illustrated above, people in California are much more likely to frequent these places and events than their counterparts nationwide. For example, 31 percent of California adults visited an art gallery or museum once in 2008, compared to 22 percent of adults outside California.

**HIGHS AND LOWS**

ARTS PARTICIPATION BY REGION



Source: National Endowment for the Arts, Survey of Public Participation in the Arts Combined File, 1982–2008.

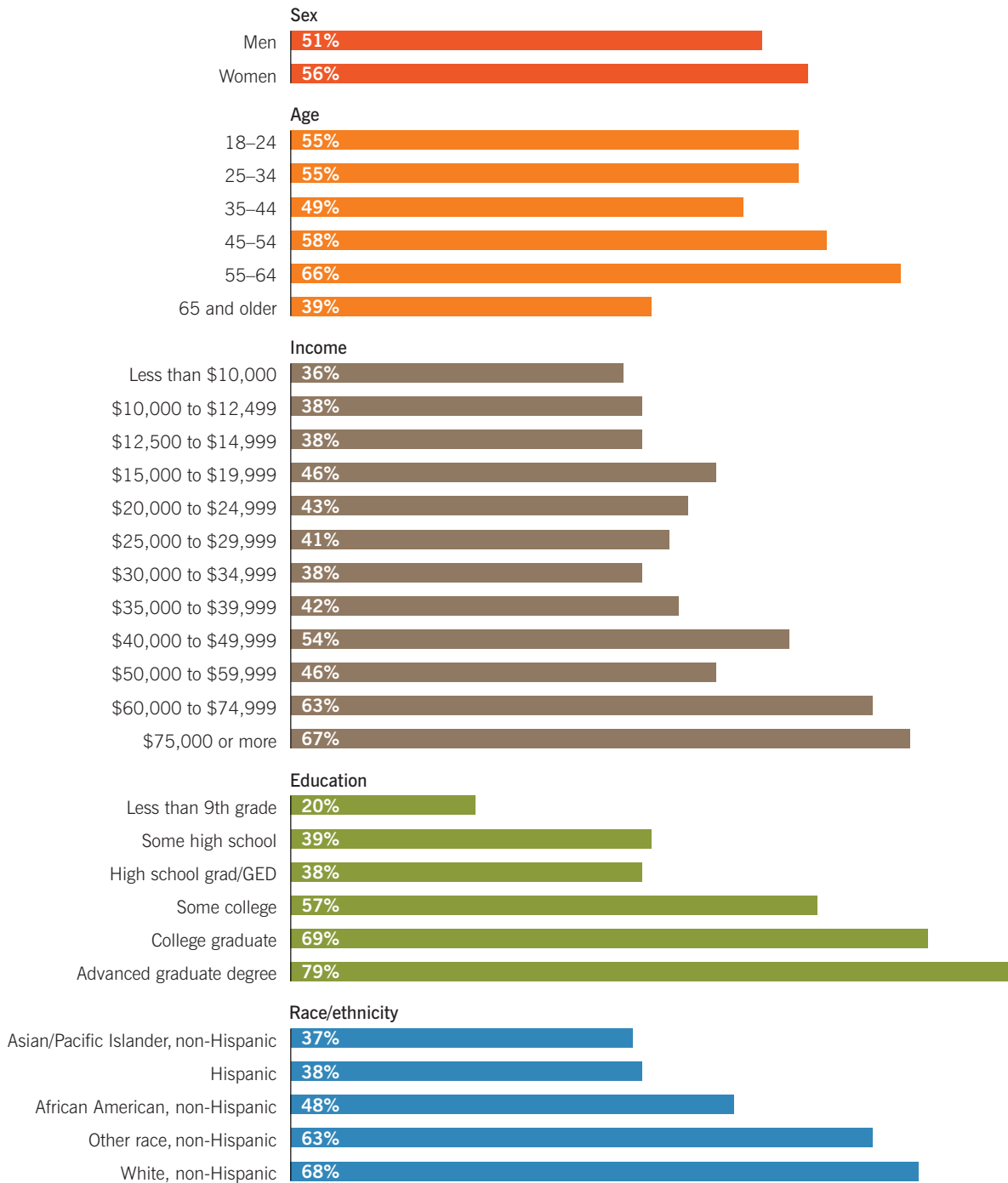
**Arts participation varies by place, dramatically.** Rates of participation in the arts are not evenly distributed across California. As shown at left, the San Francisco Bay Area contributes disproportionately to the state’s higher overall participation rate, with 66 percent in 2008.

The lowest rates are found in the Inland Empire and San Joaquin Valley; this combined area has a 42 percent participation level, which places it below the 46 percent level recorded for all states outside California. Three major urban centers — Sacramento, Los Angeles and San Diego — anchor regions with relatively high participation rates. Adults in the rest of the state — North Coast and North State, Northern Central Valley, Sierra and Central Coast regions — participate at a combined high level of 60 percent.

**Arts participation varies by demographic as well.** Adult women are more likely to attend arts and culture events than men, and older adults under age 65 are more likely to attend than younger ones. California’s young adults, Latinos and Asian-Americans, as well as low-income residents are much less likely to participate in the arts. The chart below illustrates participation levels.

**WHO IS INVOLVED?**

ARTS PARTICIPATION RATE BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP IN CALIFORNIA, 2008

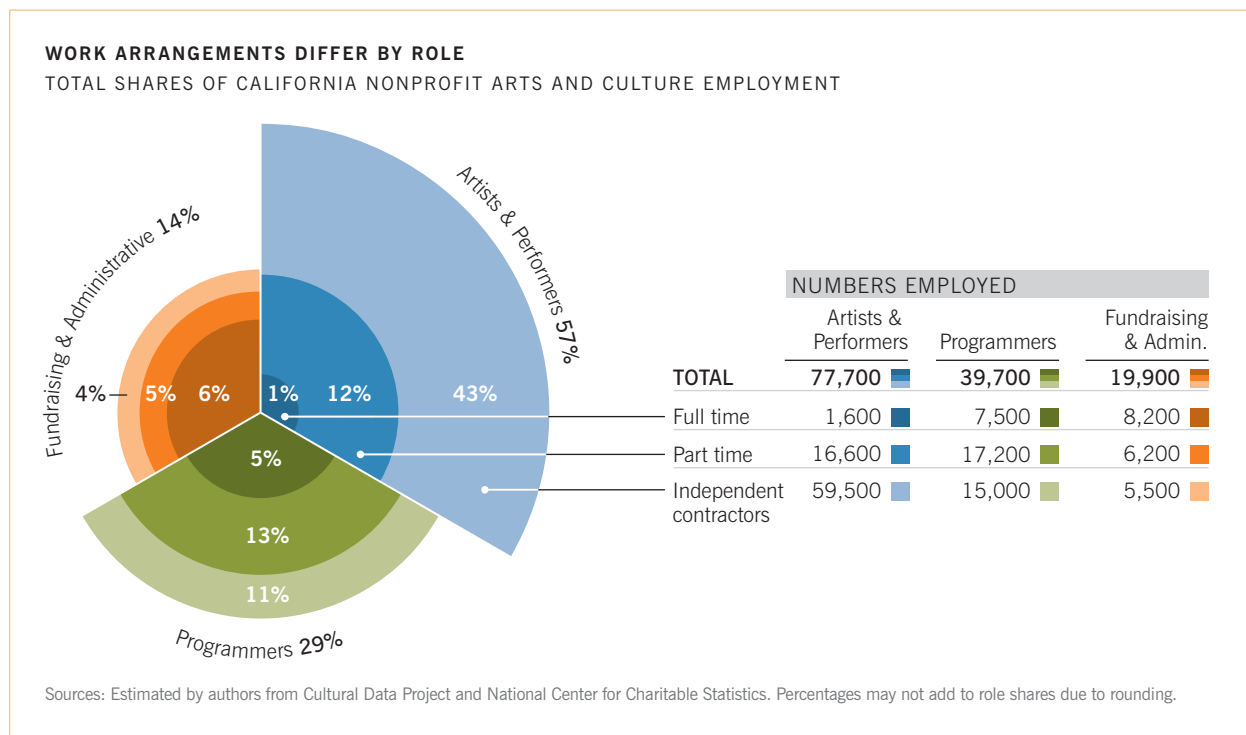


Source: National Endowment for the Arts, Survey of Public Participation in the Arts Combined File, 1982-2008.

**Californians are invested in the arts.** In addition to robust attendance at arts and culture venues and events, Californians contribute to the sector in a number of ways. For example, an estimated 2 million financial contributions are made to support nonprofit arts organizations each year.

More than 709,000 people work in the arts. Of these, 572,000 are engaged as volunteers. The remainder, more than 137,000 people, includes paid arts employees and contractors. Collectively, people working for pay in California arts nonprofits earn more than \$1.9 billion annually. A breakdown of employment by job role appears below.

California’s 77,000 artists and performers are the largest group of people working in the sector. They include the greatest number of independent contractors, underscoring the point that many artists work in multiple places. Fundraisers and administrators, by contrast, are much more likely to work full time. People tasked with arts programming — for example, developing and implementing exhibits or performances — are more likely to be employed part-time. Overall, fewer than 13 percent of people employed by arts and culture nonprofits work full time for these organizations.



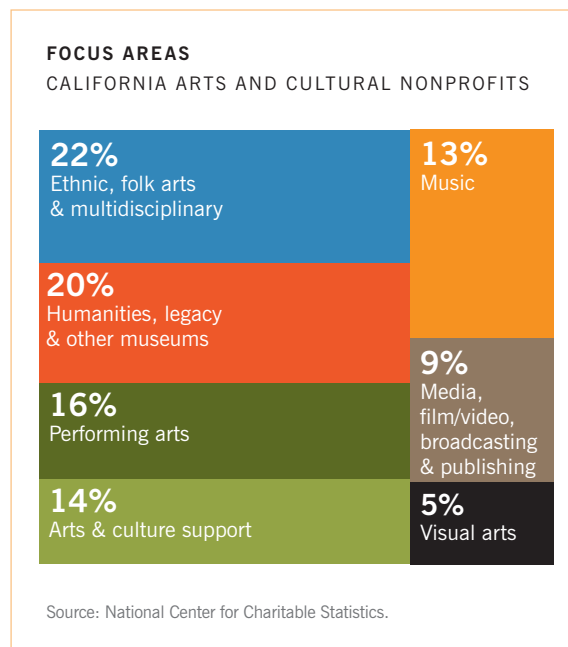
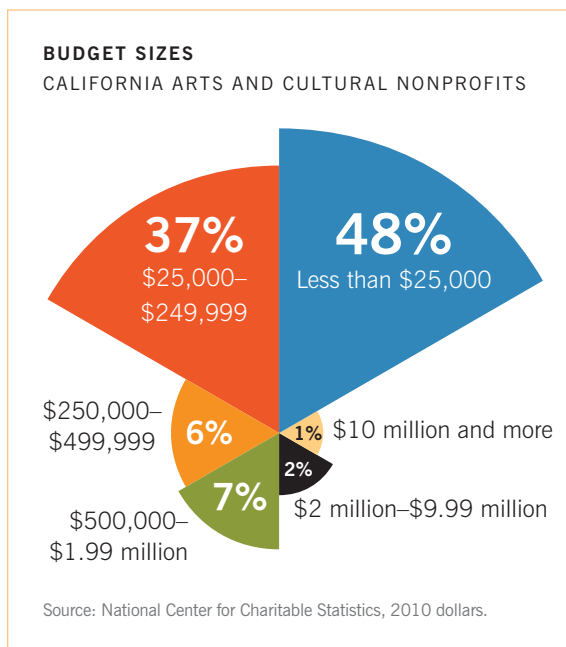
Time and talent contributions extend arts and culture dollars. For every compensated worker in the California nonprofit arts and culture sector, four times as many people give their time, energy and skills as volunteers, interns and apprentices. Approximately 61,000 board members contribute both time and money. Small organizations rely on volunteers most. While those with budgets higher than \$10 million have less than one volunteer for every five staff people, those with budgets between \$25,000 and \$250,000 use seven volunteers for each staff member.

VARIETY AND ABUNDANCE

# Arts and culture organizations range widely in California

California has 11,000 arts and culture nonprofits, placing this state ahead of most nations in the world. Nearly half are active at the grassroots level, operating on less than \$25,000 per year as shown below left. The smallest work without formal budgets and through volunteer effort. The biggest represent large-scale operations and manage multimillion dollar budgets.

The array of focus areas addressed in the sector includes multipurpose cultural centers, science museums, symphony orchestras, folk ensembles, literary societies, dance companies and support organizations such as artists' guilds and art councils. (View the research technical appendix for complete descriptions.) As shown below right, the greatest number of nonprofits (22 percent) focus on ethnic, folk arts and multidisciplinary work, reflecting California's diversity and immigrant character.



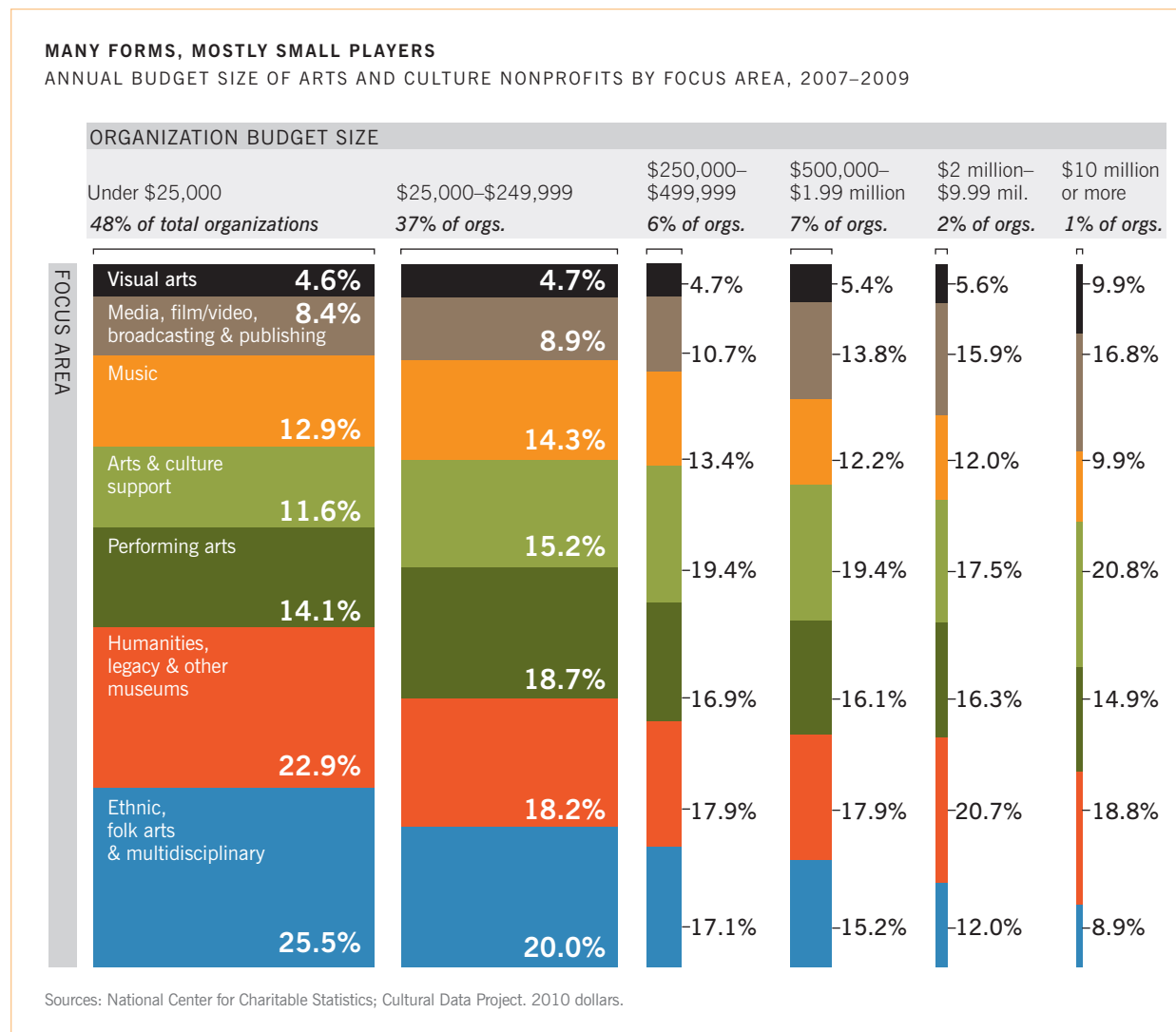
**The landscape is dotted with small organizations.** In California's arts and cultural ecology, 85 percent of California arts nonprofits work with annual budgets of less than \$250,000. At all sizes, arts nonprofits have scopes greater than formal budgets convey because they gain from volunteer time and in-kind contributions.

Nonprofits with budgets under \$250,000 are structurally varied and include membership-run and cooperative organizations. Lacking space and staff, many partner with schools or other nonprofits outside the arts to enhance their capacity. These are more likely to be found in neighborhoods and rural locales, and to be involved in solving community problems that extend beyond arts.

**Offerings are abundant and diverse.** Each year, California arts nonprofits collectively offer an estimated 277,000 performances, and almost one in four of these events takes place away from its organization's home base. They commission an estimated 41,000 theater, dance and musical compositions as well as artworks annually. On average, they are open to the public 18 hours a week for programs and performances. Surprisingly, they offer more educational programs and workshops than productions and exhibits. These offerings are complemented by activities conducted by informal arts and cultural organizations not included in the research data.



The chart below shows percents of organizations categorized by budget size *and* area of focus. For example, visual arts organizations make up fewer than 5 percent of arts nonprofits with the smallest budgets (under \$25,000) and almost 10 percent of those with the largest budgets (\$10 million or more). The largest share of small-budget nonprofits are ethnic, folk arts and multidisciplinary organizations.



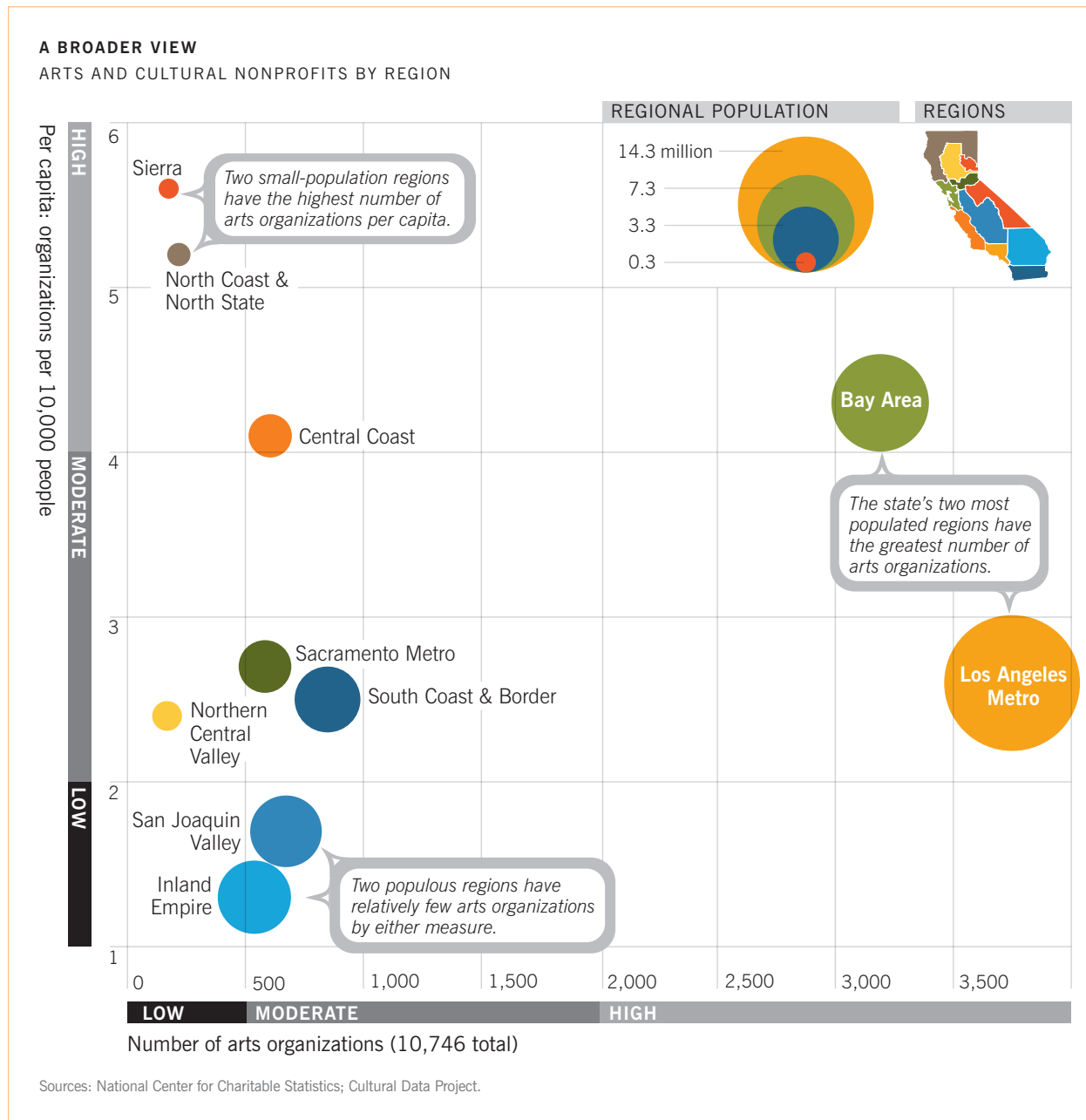
**Economic impact is measurable.** Beyond the intrinsic value they deliver, evidenced by high participation rates, California’s arts and cultural nonprofits have an economic impact on their communities and the state as a whole. Through their purchases of equipment, materials and services, rental and mortgage payments, and the spending by their employees and contractors, each year they generate \$8.6 billion in sales, \$3.6 billion in labor income and a total of 71,000 full-time jobs with average annual individual income of \$50,000.

Employment resulting from the economic activity of California arts and culture nonprofits is spread across many sectors, with concentrations in financial and business services, wholesale and retail trade, lodging and food services, and health care.

REGIONAL NATURE

# Arts and culture is an expression of home in California

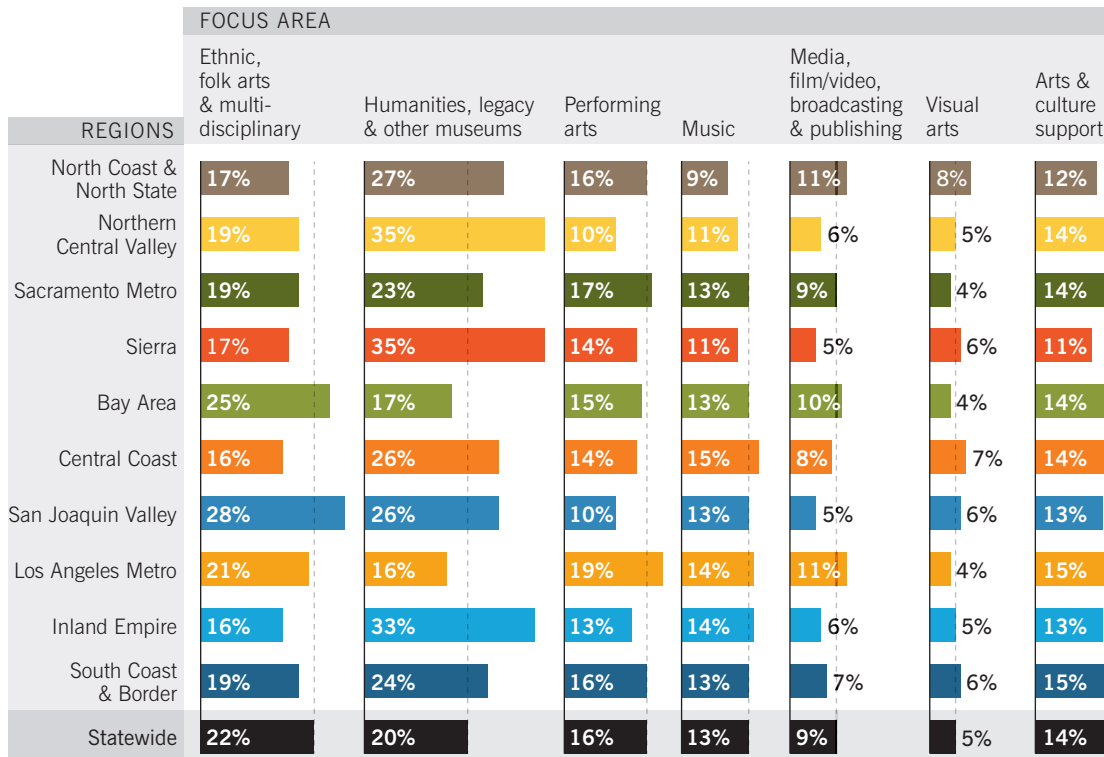
California’s regions are dramatically different from one another in size, geographic character, population density and demographics — and also in arts and culture. Development of regional attributes is influenced by many factors, including the priorities and programs of funders active in a given geography. As shown below, while major urban areas are associated with the highest numbers of arts organizations, some lag their rural counterparts with regard to number of organizations per capita.



**Big cities support big organizations.** California regions vary dramatically in size and density of population. Bigger arts and cultural nonprofits are present in large, densely populated metros, reflecting both economies of scale in reaching audiences and high concentrations of artists and designers. The Los Angeles region supports relatively more very large organizations than all other regions, and its nonprofits generate 46 percent of all the direct expenditures made by California’s arts and cultural nonprofits. Though less densely populated regions cannot support very large organizations and certain art forms, this reality does not translate into a tepid arts and culture sector. The Sierra region and the North Coast and North State region host the highest numbers of arts and culture organizations per capita. On the other hand, the Inland Empire and San Joaquin Valley have very low numbers of arts and culture organizations per capita, suggesting funding shortfalls and opportunities for future investment.

**Regional arts identities are more distinct in some places than others.** As shown below, larger than average shares of San Joaquin Valley and Bay Area organizations focus on ethnic, folk and multidisciplinary arts, while Los Angeles, despite its extraordinary population diversity, appears to be less served by these art forms. The performing arts account for larger shares in the Los Angeles and Sacramento metro areas, while the Northern Central Valley and San Joaquin Valley have comparative performing arts deficits. More Central Coast organizations focus on music than elsewhere, while the North Coast and North State region specializes in the media and visual arts. In many cases, regional offerings and organizations reflect the countries of origin of residents who have immigrated to the state.

**CHARTING EXPRESSION ACROSS CALIFORNIA**  
 FOCUS AREAS OF ARTS AND CULTURAL NONPROFITS BY REGION



Sources: National Center for Charitable Statistics; Cultural Data Project.

**Better-funded, employed and educated communities support more organizations and higher arts participation.** Several community characteristics are closely and positively associated with greater arts and cultural presence per capita: job density, levels of private philanthropic funding for the arts, levels of educational attainment and personal wealth of residents. Among densely populous regions, the San Francisco Bay Area is home to higher numbers of organizations per capita. And although California's less-populated northern regions host much lower percentages of the state's arts and culture organizations, these regions also have high numbers of organizations per capita.

Resources available for arts and culture, including public and philanthropic funding, are unevenly distributed across the state. For example, the San Francisco Bay Area receives \$26 in foundation funding per capita, while the San Joaquin Valley receives \$0.80 per capita. Arts and culture funding is positively correlated with numbers of arts organizations and participation rates in regions.

**Arts and culture's impact on employment is uneven.** In the Bay Area and Central Coast regions, direct arts shares of total employment are almost twice the state average of 0.64 percent, at 1.2 percent and 1.18 percent respectively. Indirect, arts-induced employment is more heavily concentrated in the Los Angeles and Bay Area regions, reflecting secondary employment effects — including the sale of arts supplies, the expenses of traveling performance artists and the arts-related use of financial services. Adding in the contribution of human talent, including uncompensated time and energy, would multiply the paid labor totals several times over given California's unusually large numbers of volunteers in the arts sector. Total arts-induced employment would likely be twice as large if data on patron spending related to arts participation were included.

## Conclusion

California arts and culture is noteworthy for avid participation among many populations in the state, an abundance and variety of organizations, and a distinctly regional character. These qualities indicate that art is integral to life for Californians, and that the contribution of the sector to personal and community well-being includes yet transcends economic benefits. Through involvement with arts and culture, California residents find meaning, connection, expression, entertainment, education, employment and much more.

## FOCUS ARTS, CULTURE AND CALIFORNIANS

### ABOUT FOCUS

FOCUS IS A PERIODICAL PUBLICATION OF THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION, DESIGNED TO SPOTLIGHT SELECTED ISSUES, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES OF THE NONPROFIT SECTOR IN CALIFORNIA. FOCUS AND ITS PARTNER PUBLICATION, FOCUS BRIEF, ARE AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE FROM THE FOUNDATION'S WEBSITE, [WWW.IRVINE.ORG](http://WWW.IRVINE.ORG).

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THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION IS A PRIVATE, NONPROFIT GRANTMAKING FOUNDATION DEDICATED TO EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PEOPLE OF CALIFORNIA TO PARTICIPATE IN A VIBRANT, SUCCESSFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY. THE FOUNDATION'S GRANTMAKING FOCUSES ON THREE PROGRAM AREAS: ARTS, CALIFORNIA DEMOCRACY AND YOUTH. SINCE 1937 THE FOUNDATION HAS PROVIDED OVER \$1 BILLION IN GRANTS TO MORE THAN 3,000 NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA. WITH \$1.5 BILLION IN ASSETS, THE FOUNDATION MADE GRANTS OF \$65 MILLION IN 2010 FOR THE PEOPLE OF CALIFORNIA. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE IRVINE FOUNDATION, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.IRVINE.ORG](http://WWW.IRVINE.ORG) OR CALL 415.777.2244.

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### ABOUT MARKUSEN ECONOMIC RESEARCH

MARKUSEN ECONOMIC RESEARCH CONDUCTS PIONEERING RESEARCH ON ARTISTS, ARTS ORGANIZATIONS AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD, CREATIVELY USING LARGE DATABASES, TAILORED SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS TO ADDRESS CUTTING-EDGE ISSUES SUCH AS THE DISTRIBUTION, MIGRATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF ARTISTS BY DISCIPLINE AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS; THE ROLES OF DEDICATED SPACES AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN ARTISTIC CREATION; THE LEADERSHIP OF ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AT STATE, REGIONAL, CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD LEVELS; AND THE DETERMINANTS OF ARTS ORGANIZATIONAL PRESENCE AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION.