



PATTERNMAKERS



Audience Outlook Monitor

Australian Capital Territory Snapshot

March 2022



ACT
Government

Sia Ahmad performing live at Sideway, 2021. Photo credit: GoodShout.

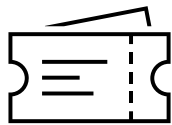
Key Facts: March 2022

Attendance Outlook



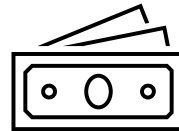
398

ACT arts attendees responded to the March 2022 survey



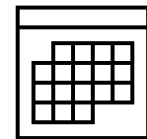
+55%

increase in ACT audiences attending since November 2021



+27%

Increase in ACT audiences spending \$50+ on cultural events



83%

of those booking events are making plans to travel within their local area

COVID-safety



59%

say the risk of transmission prevents them attending as they used to



#1

masks are the most encouraging COVID-safety measure



52%

feel encouraged by vaccination requirements at cultural events



90%

of ACT arts attendees have had three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine

Key findings: March 2022

Attendance rates in the ACT are at their peak – but audiences remain some of the most cautious in AUS

- ▶ In March 2022, data from 398 past attendees of cultural events in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) shows that attendance in the ACT is at the highest level since the study began, with the proportion attending in the past two weeks increasing from 23% in November 2021 to 78% in March.
- ▶ At the same time, ACT audiences remain some of the country's most cautious, and 2 in 5 are only comfortable to attend when they feel the risks to be minimal.
- ▶ ACT audiences generally perceive COVID-safety compliance to be high in the territory, contributing to a sense of safety at many venues. For instance, almost all arts venues are perceived as safer than using public transport, going to the gym, and flying domestically.
- ▶ While most ACT attendees have received three shots of a COVID-19 vaccine (90%), many continue to say their attendance is inhibited by the risks of transmission (59%) or being a close contact (48%).
- ▶ Some audiences remain concerned with transmitting the virus to those at-risk in their community – and 52% in the ACT identify as being vulnerable to COVID-19 themselves or having someone in their household or network who is. It will be important for the culture sector to consider varying needs among their audience bases.

Masks have overtaken vaccine requirements as the key COVID-safety measure for ACT audiences

- ▶ ACT audiences are on average more risk-averse than other audiences in the country, and many will be looking for strong COVID-safety measures as they get used to 'living with COVID'.
- ▶ Most of those attending are satisfied overall with COVID-safety measures applied at recent cultural events they attended (78% satisfied), though with 1 in 10 attendees dissatisfied, and more yet to return, there is a need for care as restrictions ease.
- ▶ High vaccination rates in the ACT mean that audience members have become less likely over time to want to see vaccine requirements in place (with 52% encouraged by this measure, down from 72% in November).
- ▶ Instead, mask-wearing is most important to ACT audiences – with 68% encouraged by mandatory mask policies, and only 13% discouraged. Despite no longer being mandatory in most indoor settings, masks are still a 'dealbreaker' for many.
- ▶ As measures are gradually relaxed, cautious audiences will be relying more upon the COVID-safety policies of individual venues to mitigate the risks of transmission, and some believe that a rigorous approach to COVID-safety is a way for venues to create inclusive spaces for those who are more vulnerable.

ACT audiences are eager to make plans, but the pandemic is influencing their preferences

- ▶ The data shows that ACT audiences are feeling optimistic about attending in 2022, with 84% making firm plans to attend an in-person cultural event (up from 65% in November 2021).
- ▶ The ACT's many museums and galleries can expect a boost in visitation, with 48% of ACT audience members making plans to attend, up from 27% in November 2022.
- ▶ ACT arts audiences are reporting the highest spending levels since the pandemic started, with 57% spending more than \$50 and 32% spending more than \$100. However, full economic recovery is still some way off, and with cases climbing once more in March 2022, cautious optimism is wise.
- ▶ Shorter booking timeframes are still common in the ACT – and some (16%) say their preferences for attendance changes have changed, mostly to less busy times as audiences try to avoid risk.
- ▶ Cultural tourism is beginning to show signs of improvement – but the ACT audiences who made plans to attend in the future are much more likely to be travelling within their local area (83%) for these events, rather than travelling interstate (32%).
- ▶ The arts continue to be perceived as vital to community recovery, providing an avenue for connection and resilience in times of hardship. While some audiences are yet to return, they are firm in wanting to support artists and help cultural activity to flourish in new ways.

Introduction

About the ACT Sample

This Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Snapshot Report outlines key findings from the March 2022 phase of the Audience Outlook Monitor in Australia (Phase 7), based on data collected from 398 audience members living in the ACT.

Prior to Phase 6 (November 2021), the ACT Snapshot Report reported on two different audience groups. The first is the 362 survey respondents connected with ACT-based arts and culture organisations ('audiences of ACT organisations') which typically attract a nation-wide audience. In this phase of research, this sample of audience members is drawn from the ACT (84%), New South Wales (NSW) (14%) and further afield (2%).

The second is the 398 respondents who live in the ACT themselves ('ACT-based respondents'), many of whom are connected with ACT-based organisations, but some whom are audiences of organisations in Victoria (VIC), NSW and elsewhere.

In the latest (March 2022) and previous (November 2021) rounds of data collection, the views of 'audiences of ACT organisations' and 'ACT-based respondents' have been very similar. For this reason, this report will only refer to 'ACT audiences,' an umbrella term which captures the perspectives of both groups.

About the Study

Launched in May 2020, the Audience Outlook Monitor is tracking audience sentiment in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each phase involves a cross-sector collaborative survey process involving around 100 arts and culture organisations, including museums, galleries, performing arts organisations and festivals.

On 9 March 2022, participating organisations simultaneously sent the Phase 7 survey to a random sample of their audience – defined as those who had attended an arts or cultural event in person since January 2018.

This report compares the new results with data collected previously in March 2021 (Phase 4), July 2021 (Phase 5) and November 2021 (Phase 6), to examine how things are changing over time.

In addition to this Snapshot Report, the March 2022 results are accessible in a free interactive dashboard. Users can explore the data for different artforms, types of events and demographic groups in all parts of Australia. For more information about the study, and to access resources such as the dashboard, visit:

www.thepatternmakers.com.au/covid19.

Read on for the key March 2022 findings for the ACT.

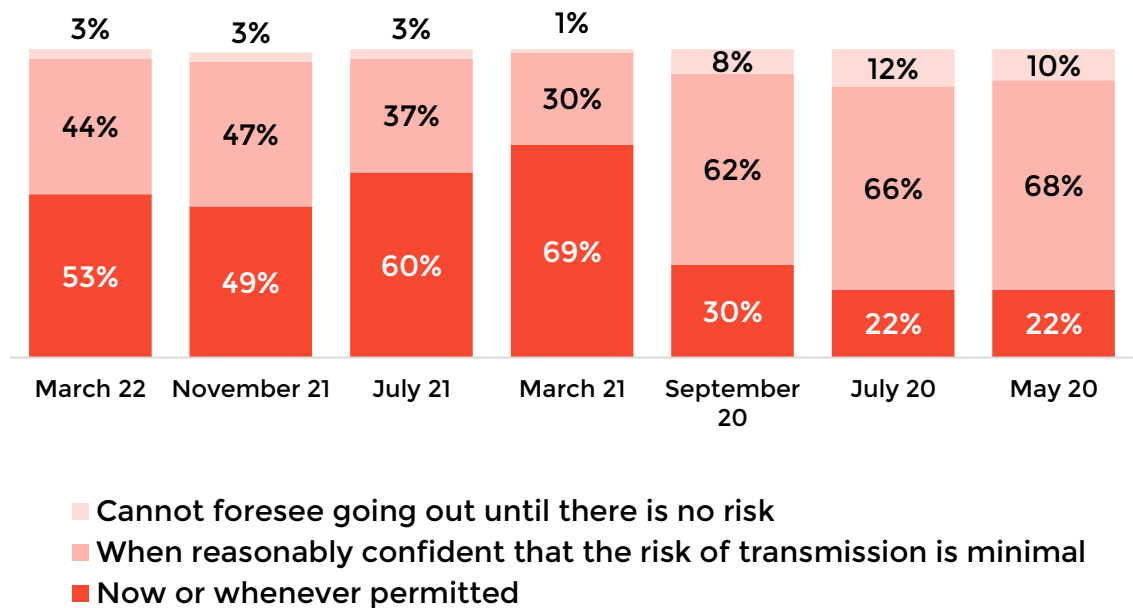
Current conditions

Half of ACT audiences are 'ready to attend' now or whenever permitted

In the ACT, audience confidence has increased slightly since November – with 53% of audiences ready to attend 'now or whenever permitted', compared to 49% in November.

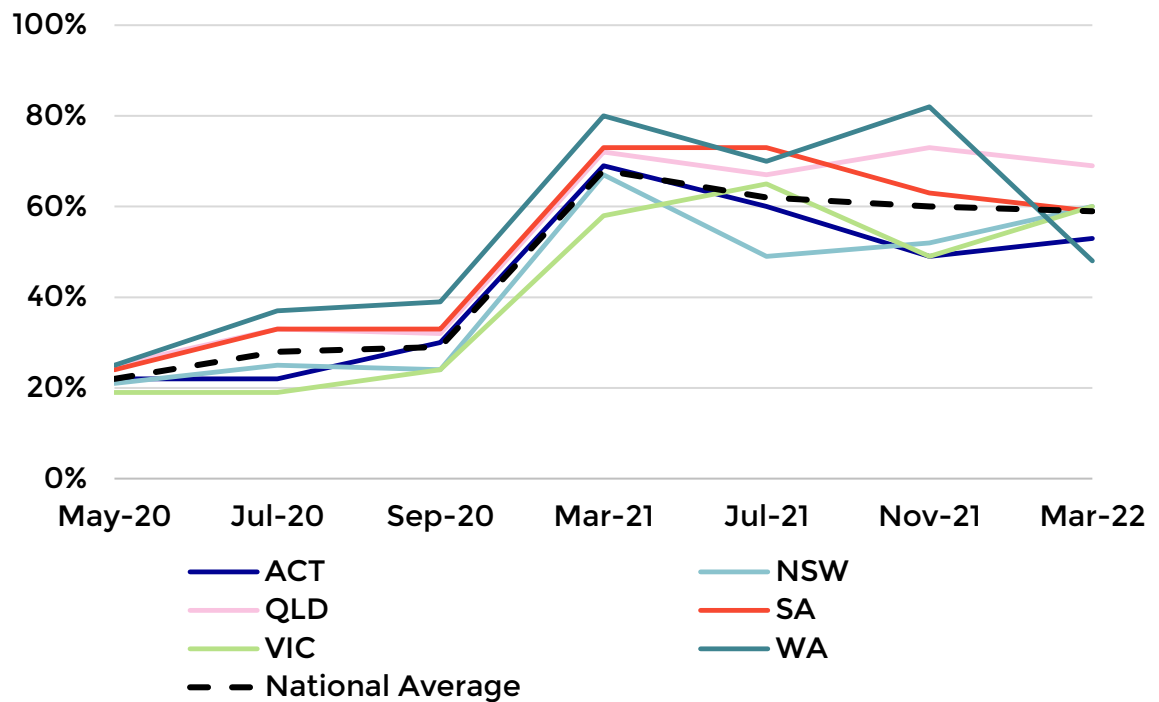
Compared to November – when the ACT's lockdown had only recently been lifted – the territory's 'post-lockdown' era was well underway when data was collected in March. However, high numbers of Omicron cases appear to be keeping confidence from returning to pre-Delta levels (with 60% 'ready to attend' in July and 69% 'ready to attend' in March).

Figure 1: Proportion of audiences who are 'ready to attend now or as soon as permitted'. ACT audiences, May 2020 to March 2022 (n=398)



Confidence in the ACT remains below the national average (59% 'ready to attend'), alongside Western Australia (WA). Generally, however, confidence is levelling out across the country - as outbreak conditions and restrictions become more alike in the different states and territories. (Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Proportion of audiences who are 'ready to attend now or as soon as permitted'. By state/territory, May 2020 to March 2022 (n=8,369)



For the 1 in 2 audience members in the ACT who are 'ready to attend', this confidence appears to be linked to generally high COVID-safety compliance in the ACT, as well as an eagerness to return to arts and culture. One said,

'I'm confident in attending events because there's a high level of vaccination in the ACT and still a relatively high level of voluntary mask-wearing in indoor spaces. And, most importantly, I'm keen to support the arts sector and artists.'

There are varying needs and vulnerabilities amongst the 4 in 10 ACT audience members who remain cautious

As ACT audiences become accustomed to the prospect of 'living with the virus,' another 4 in 10 (44%) say they'll only attend when the risk is minimal, and 3% won't tolerate any risk at all.

For many of these audiences, feelings of readiness appear to be linked closely with their personal circumstances. The survey asked respondents if they, or anyone in their network is vulnerable to a serious health outcome from COVID-19.

As many as half (52%) of ACT audience members answered yes – with 11% vulnerable to a serious health outcome themselves, 16% living with someone vulnerable, and 28% connected to someone vulnerable in their extended/family network.

When asked about their readiness to attend, only 26% of audiences who were themselves vulnerable to a serious health outcome were ready to attend arts and cultural events. One ACT audience member said,

‘I am immunocompromised and so although I have had 4 injections I am very careful about going out and have cancelled 3 opera tickets in Sydney so far this year.’

Readiness to attend somewhat decreases with age, with older audience members more likely to report vulnerability to COVID-19. Around 4 in 10 ACT audience members over 65 were ‘ready to attend’, compared to more than half of audiences aged under 65.

One ACT audience member said,

‘I’m nearly 80 so I’m cautious. But I do miss live chamber music and films, so I pluck up courage and go.’

Compared to non-disabled audience members (54% ready to attend), audience members with a disability were also less likely to be ready to attend right now (33%). One ACT audience member with disability said,

‘I am a person with disabilities and a wheelchair user with health issues. I will continue to wear masks when in public and attending venues. I have become a lot more anxious about being in crowds since the pandemic started.’

Comments from audience members in these cohorts suggest some are anxious about the varying needs of the community being overlooked as the country reopens – an important consideration for arts organisations going forward.

Most arts venues continue to be seen as safer than common public activities, like using public transport and going to the gym

Compared to November 2021, when the ACT had only recently lifted its lockdown, comfort with public activities and arts attendance had increased in March 2022.

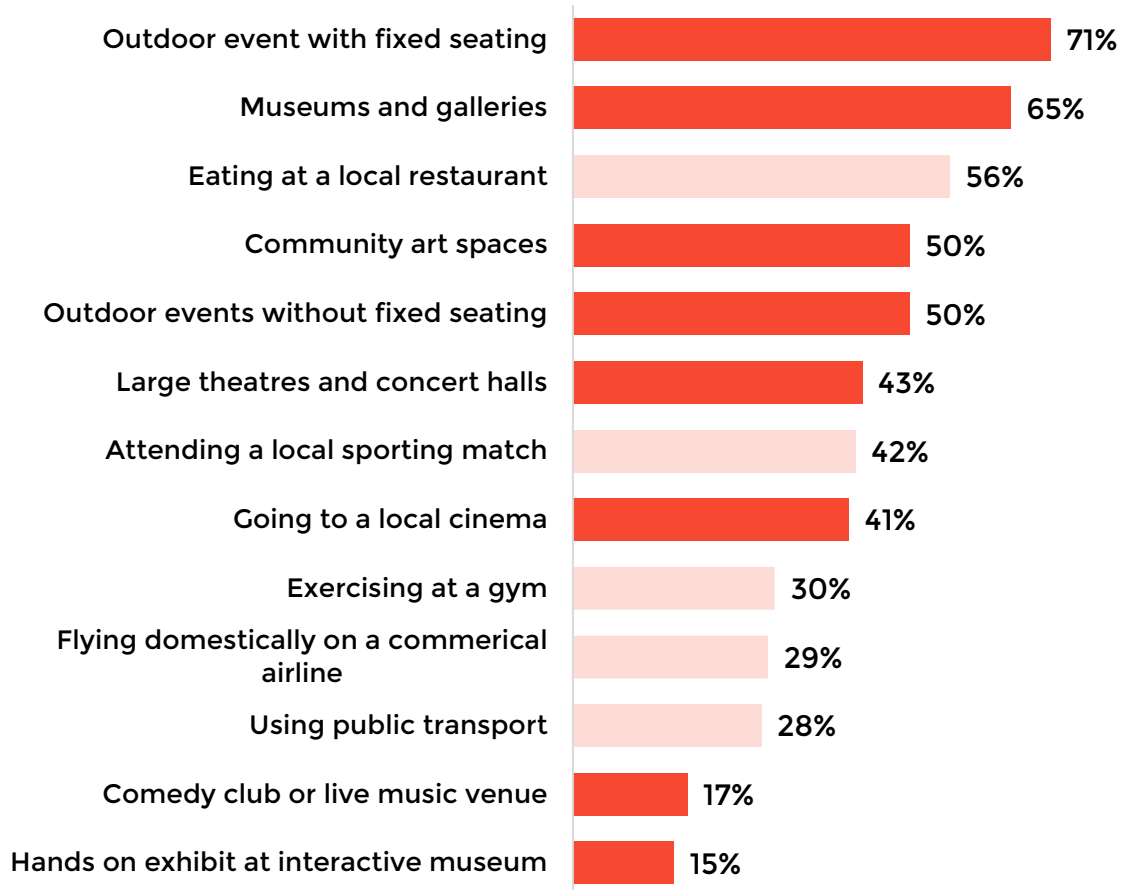
A similar pattern is evident in VIC and NSW – states which, like the ACT, were recovering from outbreaks of the Delta variant when data was last collected in November 2021.

Among arts and cultural venues, outdoor venues with fixed seating continue to be perceived as safest – with 71% of ACT audiences ‘very comfortable’ in these environments, up from 65% in November. Close behind were museums and galleries (65% ‘very comfortable’, up from 55% in November).

As a general rule, comfort at most arts venues remains higher than many other common public activities – including attending a sporting event, exercising at a gym, flying domestically on a commercial airline, and using public transport. (Figure 3.)

The exceptions to this rule are hands-on interactive exhibitions and comedy clubs, which attract the lowest levels of audience comfort. Feedback from audiences suggests that crowded environments or those involving tactile experiences tend to feel the least COVID-safe.

Figure 3: Proportion of audiences 'very comfortable' attending the following public activities and arts and cultural venues. ACT audiences, March 2022 (n=398)



Live attendance

As audiences adjust to living with COVID, attendance rates in the ACT are at their highest since the study began

As the ACT adjusts to 'living with COVID', attendance at cultural events has recovered to pre-Delta levels.

In March 2022, 78% of audiences said they attended an in-person cultural event in the fortnight before data collection (9-13 March), a significant increase since November 2021 (23%). This is, in fact, the highest attendance rate recorded in the ACT since the study began – on par with pre-Delta levels in March 2021 (76%).

Similarly, audiences in VIC and NSW are also becoming more active following extended lockdowns in 2021.

More than 8 in 10 ACT audiences are making firm plans to attend cultural events

Following a period of summer programming, and some cultural organisations launching new seasons or announcing programs, the majority of ACT audiences are making firm plans to attend arts and cultural events in future.

In March 2022, 84% of ACT audiences reported making plans for in-person attendance in the future, increasing significantly since November 2021 (65%), when audiences were beginning to emerge from a long period of lockdown.

In particular, the proportion of ACT audience members making plans to attend museums and galleries has increased, from 27% in November 2021 to 48% in March 2022.

ACT audiences continue to book events in the short-term – and are less likely to make long-term bookings compared to November 2021

When asked about the timing of scheduled events, ACT audiences continue to book events in the short term – with the proportion making longer-term bookings down, relative to November 2021.

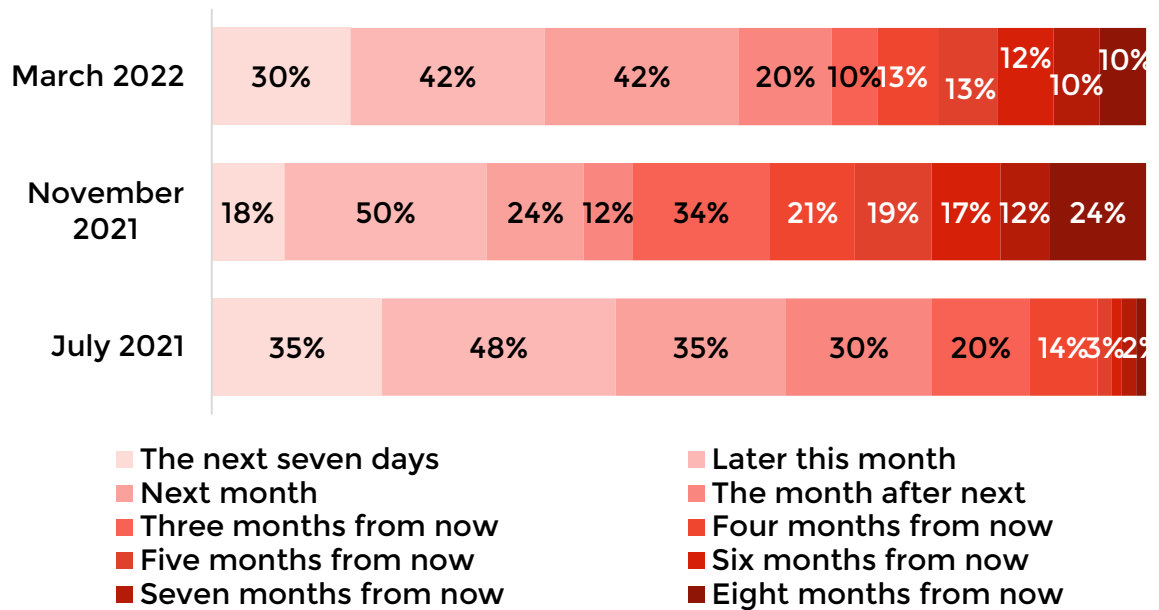
The proportion booking events within the next seven days has increased from 18% in November 2021 to 30% in March 2022 – as has the proportion booking events for next month (42%, up from 24% in November). Short-term bookings now represent the greatest proportion of events, as shown in Figure 4.

Bookings for events happening between three to eight months from now have decreased, as ACT audiences appear to be favouring short-term planning. The availability of events post-Summer season, and lingering uncertainty around outbreak conditions are likely playing a role.

One audience member says,

‘Just not knowing what COVID levels or variants will be in the community in months to come makes it hard to commit to booking anything too far in the future.’

Figure 4: In the past fortnight, did you purchase tickets for one or more live shows or performances that are scheduled for...? ACT audiences, March 2022 (n=186), November 2021 (n=140) and July 2021 (n=181)



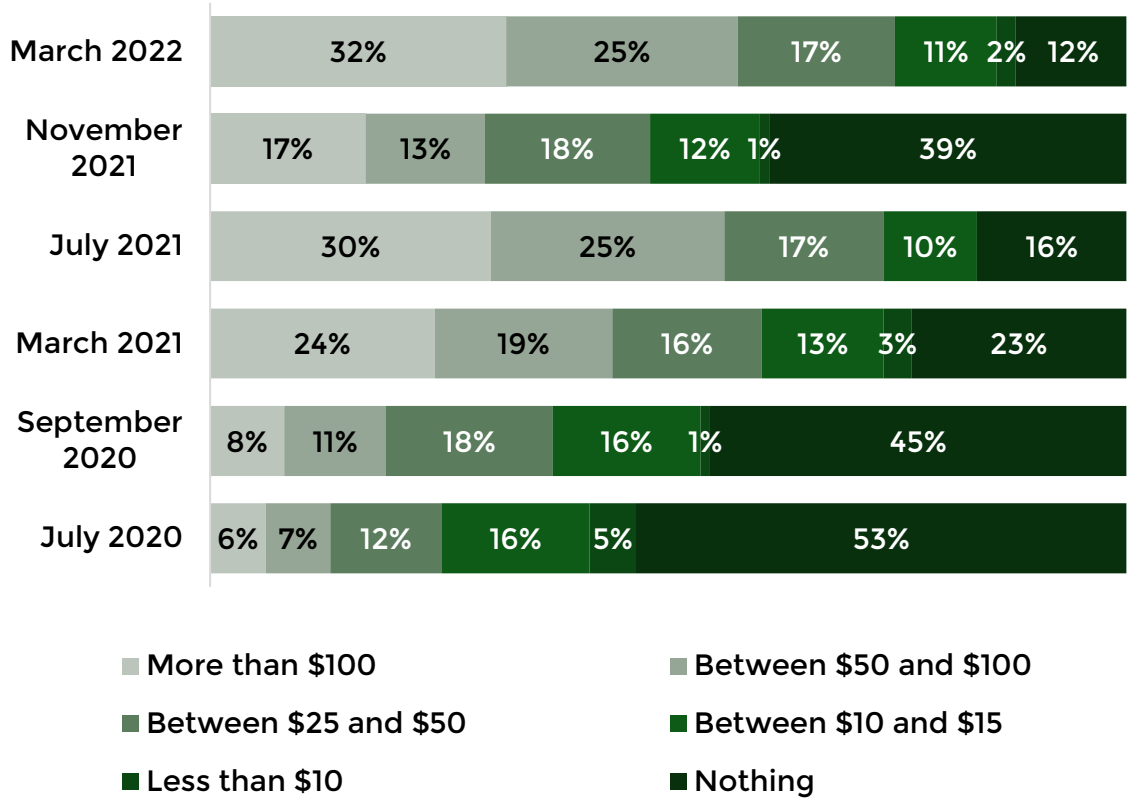
Signs of economic recovery are growing, with ACT audiences reporting the highest spending levels since the pandemic started

Among those attending live performances, ACT audiences are spending the most they have in the past two years. 6 in 10 (57%) audience members said they have spent more than \$50 in the past fortnight (Figure 5) – on par with July 2021 (55%), and higher than any other month.

Spending has increased significantly since November 2021, when only 30% were spending \$50 or more – with audiences exercising caution as they came out of lockdowns.

March 2022 saw the largest proportion of ACT audiences spending more than \$100 (32%) since the study began, a promising sign that the sector’s economic recovery is underway.

Figure 5: In the past fortnight, how much did you spend on tickets to in-person live events & cultural activities? ACT audiences, March 2022 (n=310), November 2021 (n=93), July 2021 (n=286), March 2021 (n=449), September 2020 (n=187,) & July 2020 (n=177).



Cultural tourism is still in the early stages of recovery, with 8 in 10 ACT audiences opting for local events

In March 2022, audiences who made firm plans to attend a cultural event(s) were asked where those events were located.

Local loyalty appears to be remaining prevalent among arts attendees in the ACT, with 83% saying they made plans to attend an event in their local area. The proportion travelling within the ACT but outside their local area was significantly less (26%) – likely owing to the small size of the territory.

Some respondents suggested they felt safer within their local area because of high COVID-safety compliance, with one saying,

‘ACT has excellent vaccination rates, COVID response measures, and the local community is mindful of social distancing, hygiene,

and mask-wearing. I feel relatively safe in Canberra, despite knowing every activity comes with risk.'

Only around a third of ACT audiences are travelling interstate for cultural events (32%) – with concerns about the safety and practicalities of interstate travel still a factor for many. One ACT audience member said,

'Travelling interstate to see a show is less appealing now (more to cancel if you are a close contact, don't want to isolate away from home etc) so I hope more events can come to us!'

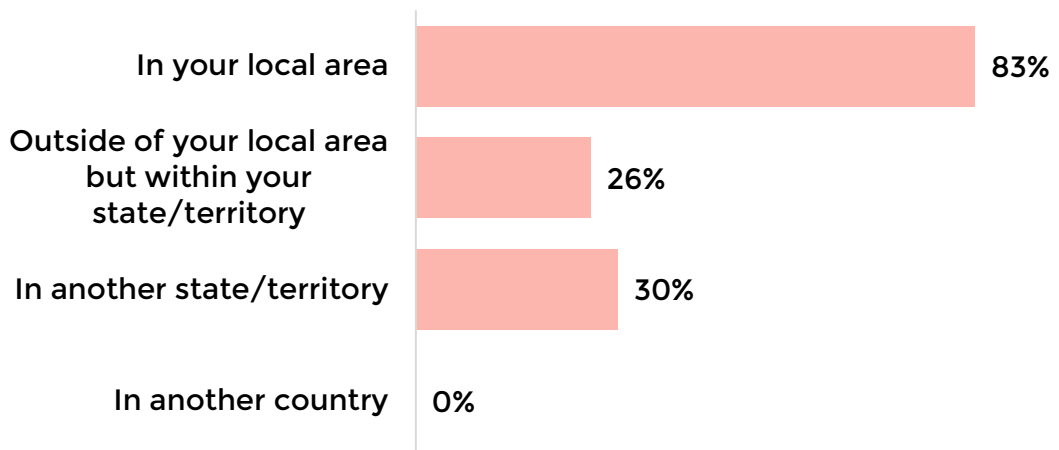
Another said they were concerned about recouping travel costs if interstate shows were cancelled, with one saying,

'Have had Hamilton shows cancelled twice (interstate) so am very hesitant to try again. The cost of travel and accommodation is the issue - refunds were easy and everyone helpful as far as tickets went.'

In terms of COVID-safety, just 3 in 10 (29%) feel very comfortable flying domestically on a commercial airline – and some ACT audiences are limiting their interstate travel to nearby NSW, which is accessible by car. One audience member said,

'I have been trying to attend as many local events as possible and try to live a normal life. I attended a really big conference in Sydney last week ... I drove to and from the venue and didn't fly.'

Figure 6: Were those plans for attending a venue or event ... (select multiple). ACT audiences, March 2022 (n=332)



A small proportion are changing their attendance patterns, mostly to avoid COVID-19 risks

Audiences were asked whether their preferred attendance times had changed, in light of COVID-19. The majority of ACT audiences (75%) say that their preferences have not changed, while 16% say they have. Another 9% are not sure.

This rate is higher in the ACT and other states affected by 2021 outbreaks, VIC (15%) and NSW (14%) – compared to those in WA (8%), Queensland (QLD) (10%) and South Australia (SA) (11%).

There are mixed views surrounding attendance times. Some audiences reported lifestyle changes or work arrangements affecting their decisions. One said,

‘I used to attend after work. However, I find I no longer have the energy/stamina/attention span for this so am more likely to attend on a weekend.’

However, most are avoiding what they perceive as peak times at venues in order to avoid crowds, for example,

‘I go to the cinema during weekdays, I choose weeknights early in the week to attend live performance, I try to choose times when fewer people are there.’

And,

‘I prefer to go more often during the weekdays to account for the weekend crowds. Weekdays are underrated for their peace and (hopefully) reduced transmission risk.’

Indeed, ACT audience members who are more risk-averse are more likely to say their preferred times have changed (23%) compared to those who are ready to attend now (12%).

COVID-safety and vaccination

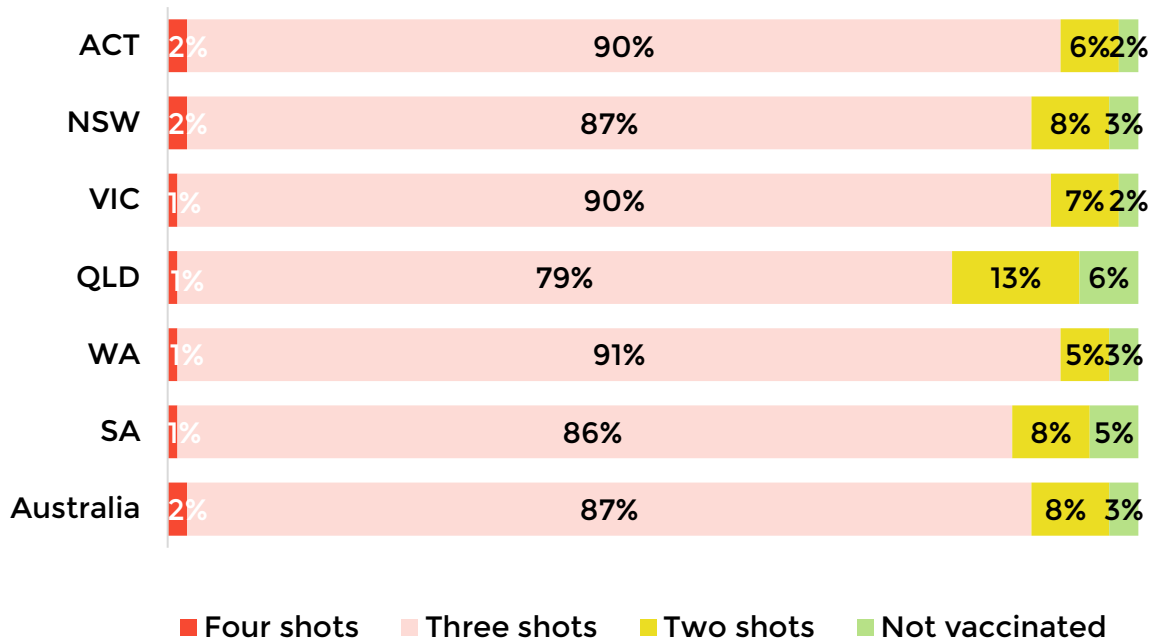
Arts audiences continue to lead the way on vaccination – with 9 in 10 ACT audiences having received three shots

As of 22 March, 90% of ACT arts audiences have received three shots of the COVID-19 vaccine (up from just 5% in November) – compared to [around 73% of the eligible ACT population as of 13 March](#).

ACT audiences are among the most likely in the country to be triple-vaccinated, alongside those in WA (90%) and VIC (90%).

Compared to the other states/territories, where vaccination rates increase proportionally with age, vaccination rates in the ACT are relatively stable across age cohorts – ranging from 90% (among under 35-year-olds) to 96% (among 55 to 64-year-olds).

Figure 7: Proportion of audiences who are vaccinated March 2022. By state/territory (n=8,309)



When asked if they have been infected with COVID-19 in the past, just 7% of ACT arts audiences say they have – compared to 14% of audiences in nearby NSW. Younger ACT audiences were also more likely to have

had COVID-19 than older audiences – with 12% of those under 35 having had the virus, compared to 6% of those aged 75+.

Many remain concerned with the risk of transmitting the virus or becoming a close contact

When asked what is preventing them from attending arts and cultural events in the next year, the risk of contracting or transmitting the virus continues to be the primary concern for ACT audiences (59%, up from 54% in November 2021), as shown in Figure 8.

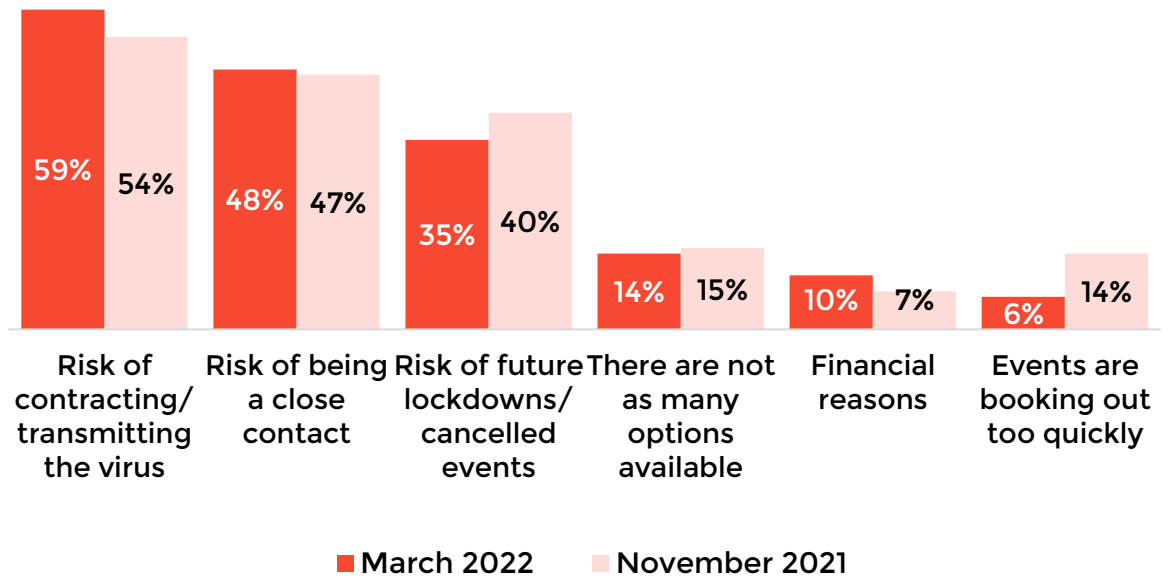
Some expressed concern about attending while case numbers remain high, with one saying a ‘dealbreaker’ for attendance would be,

‘an increase in the weekly numbers of COVID infection cases.’

With the country entering its [post-vaccination phase of the national policy](#), ACT audiences are slightly less likely to be concerned about the risk of lockdowns and cancelled events (35%, down from 40% in November 2021).

However, half (48%) continue to be concerned with the risk of being a close contact and needing to isolate (stable with 47% in November 2021) – and note the possibility of events being cancelled for this reason.

Figure 8: Proportion of audiences who say these factors will prevent them from attending in-person arts and culture events as they used to in the past. ACT audiences, March 2022 (n=398) and November 2021 (n=401)



Masks and capacity limits are the most important COVID-safety measures for ACT audiences

Mask-wearing is the most important COVID-safety measure for ACT audiences - with 68% saying they are encouraged by mask mandates.

Since November, ACT has lifted its mask mandates in most indoor settings – but masks remain ‘dealbreakers’ for many ACT audience members, with one saying,

‘If [an event] was indoors with no masks I would not attend, especially with larger groups. I have no problems with events operating at full capacity, however I believe masks should continue to be worn indoors for inside events where people are in very close proximity to strangers.’

Another said their ‘dealbreaker’ was,

‘Not requiring masks. I don't want to sit next to strangers who don't think that is the minimum they can do to keep other people safe.’

After masks, ACT audiences were most likely to be encouraged by 'limiting capacity to 75%' (64%) – with only 6% discouraged by this measure. One audience member said,

'If an event is held at 100% capacity with no masks required, I wouldn't go.'

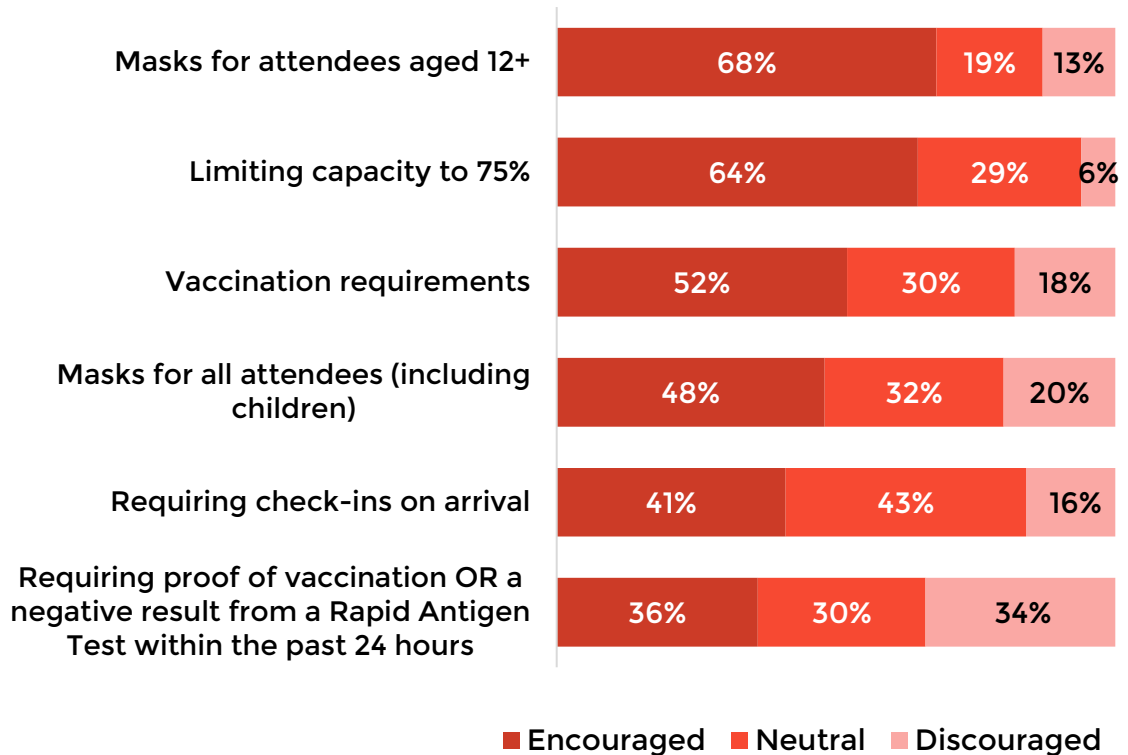
Another said,

'An enclosed, full to capacity room would discourage me to attend an event.'

However, some audience members pointed out that enforcement of capacity limits is equally important as the limits themselves, with one ACT audience member saying,

'There need to be capacity limits for indoor exhibitions, and these limits need to be observed and managed. For example, I went to the Matisse exhibition in Sydney in early January, where there were capacity limits, but in many spaces these limits seemed to be exceeded.'

Figure 9: How much would each of the following steps discourage or encourage you to attend? ACT audiences, March 2022 (n=398)



Compared to audiences in other states/territories, vaccination requirements are less likely to encourage ACT audiences

Around half (52%, down from 72%) of ACT audiences are encouraged by vaccine passports, compared to a national average of 71% - the lowest proportion in the country.

However, the remainder of ACT audiences are more likely to be neutral about (30%) than discouraged by (18%) this measure – and many simply consider it redundant in light of the ACT’s high vaccination rates. One audience member says,

‘I don’t think vaccine passports are necessary with the current levels of vaccination. The unvaccinated pose no risk to the vaccinated, only themselves. so let everyone just attend.’

Another says,

‘A high percentage of ACT residents are vaccinated so its unnecessary waste of time to show proofs.’

There are still a number of ACT audience members who consider proof of vaccination ‘dealbreakers’, with one saying,

‘If there were going to be a lot of people packed together, I would probably not attend an event unless proof of vaccination or legitimate medical exemption was a condition of entry.’

Another saying,

‘I would be significantly more comfortable attending somewhere that proof of vaccination was mandatory.’

Check-ins have become less important to ACT audiences as the viability of contact tracing decreases

Fewer than half (41%) of ACT audiences are encouraged by check-ins in March 2022, with another 43% feeling neutral about this measure.

With the ACT [no longer conducting formal contact tracing](#) and relying on individuals to identify their own contacts, some no longer see the need for check-in protocols.

One audience member said,

‘I believe the continued use of QR codes would be helpful in the event of another major outbreak, however I do understand the difficulty in continuing this method of contact tracing & the problems it poses for staff.’

However, some audience members continue to see check-ins as essentials or ‘dealbreakers’, with one saying,

‘I won’t attend without visual indication of COVID-safety procedures (hand sanitiser, staff in masks, check in codes).’

24-hour rapid antigen testing won’t encourage the majority of ACT audiences

Only a third of ACT audiences (36%) are encouraged by the option to provide proof of vaccination OR a recent rapid antigen test (RAT) – with 34% discouraged.

Some expressed concern about the accuracy of rapid antigen tests, with one saying,

‘Using negative RATs as an entry "permit" is almost pointless as people use them incorrectly and don't test positive until symptomatic, I would prefer proof of vaccination and surgical or N95/P2 masks.’

Another said,

‘RATs are not always reliable and I doubt everyone could afford to be doing them for every event and they are a waste disposal nightmare.’

Others were concerned about the practicalities of a RAT requirement, with one saying,

‘There is absolutely no way I would agree to do RATs for each performance.’

8 in 10 ACT audience members who attended recently are satisfied with COVID-safety at arts events

As mentioned previously, arts and cultural venues are generally perceived as COVID-safe spaces.

When ACT audience members who had recently attended a cultural event were asked how satisfied they were with the COVID-safety procedures in place, 3 in 4 (78%) responded that they were satisfied, and 10% were dissatisfied.

ACT audiences remain confident that vaccination will allow normal activities to resume – but for some, the picture is more complex

Compared to November 2021, ACT audiences are less likely to be ‘very confident’ that the vaccination effort will allow normal activities to resume within a year (32%, down from 45%) – and more likely to be

‘somewhat confident’ (61%, up from 50%). Although in the minority, the proportion ‘not at all confident’ has increased slightly (7%, up from 4%).

Some ACT audience members say that the transmissibility of the Omicron variant has made them more conscious of the need for COVID-safety measures alongside vaccination. One said,

‘We can't rely on vaccination alone, and need to combine it with other measures like social distancing and masks.’

The possibility of new variants on the horizon is also a factor for many audience members, with one saying,

‘Vaccination protects us from previous strains of the virus. We don't know how it will do with future strains.’

Another said,

‘It's still early days in terms of knowing if we will need more boosters. We are at a plateau now that could change in a few months as immunity wanes and we wait for decisions on that - this means that if there's another wave of Covid at that time we could see a return to restrictions and cancellations.’

Role of arts in recovery

Uplifting content will attract ACT audiences over the next year – while many are eager to return to the things they love

Looking ahead over the next 12 months, ACT audiences are most interested in engaging with the same kinds of cultural activities they used to attend, pre-pandemic (88%).

Light-hearted content continues to be more attractive to audiences (44%), compared to works that help to make sense of the pandemic (10%) – a trend that has remained consistent throughout the study.

Some ACT audience members referenced uplifting content in improving overall morale in the community, after two years of living in the pandemic. One said,

'[I want to see] Positive and light-hearted entertainment e.g., comedy, musicals etc. Nothing too deep and thought-provoking that can lead to depression and not enjoying an event.'

Another said,

'Creativity is life-force! When we were locked in, we turned to fiction, dramas and so on – story-telling and sharing is how we make sense of ourselves and our world. For me, stories need to have some fun and lightness woven through, even with serious messages, or else it is too much to absorb.'

ACT audiences see an enduring role for arts and culture in facilitating healing and connection

ACT audiences were invited to share examples for how arts and culture organisations can play a role in the recovery from the pandemic.

Consistent with the [Visions for Culture](http://www.thepatternmakers.com.au/visions-for-culture) (www.thepatternmakers.com.au/visions-for-culture analysis), audiences shared a vision for arts and culture to provide avenues for healing, joy and escapism. As one ACT audience member said,

'Art - light, dark, funny, sad, has always provided me a great deal of comfort. Whether it's to assist me in an escape, process what I'm going through, or allow me to be thoroughly entertained or mentally stimulated and provoked. Art provides this more than almost anything for me. I am chronically ill, and these past few months I've been pretty debilitated. If I didn't have [art], I'd be incredibly limited with how I spend my time, and my mental health would certainly take a dive.'

Another said,

'[Art can] bring community together. A sense of connection and hope. Fun and relaxation. Creating beauty, wonder and awe-inspiring work/s.'

Others mentioned the importance of sending positive messages, as well as offering creative spaces to facilitate community connection.

One said,

‘Provide a sense of normality. Being able to see exhibitions, shows and performances provide excellent memories between friends and families. That connection and shared experience with other people has been lacking during the pandemic. With online school and working from home, there is a sense of disconnect. The arts and culture organisations can begin to bridge these gaps.’

The arts can play a leading role in rebuilding trust and advocating for safety and inclusion

While many audience members would like to see a return to ‘normal’, some envision a role for arts and culture organisations to advocate for needs within the community, brought to light by the pandemic.

Some ACT audience members suggested that arts events should be used to model an accessible and inclusive return to public life – one in which communities are re-energised and rejuvenated while also respecting the needs and safety of others. One ACT audience member called for,

‘Smaller venues, less people, better environments... more interaction and mutual creativity, and perhaps ongoing relationships. Participation-centred art that draws the creativity out of more diverse people.’

Another said arts organisations could aid in the recovery by,

‘Continuing to make art accessible, e.g. through online or streaming options.’

The arts are an integral part of life for many – and ACT audiences want to show support after two difficult years

ACT audiences were asked to share suggestions of messages for artists and cultural organisations, as they look to the recovery process.

Many people shared heartfelt messages that showed their appreciation for art and culture in times of hardship. One said,

‘Arts and culture organisations are already doing their role to assist the pandemic by doing exactly what they've always done. The fact that that sector has taken such a massive hit from the pandemic means to me that everyone else should be doing more to support them, not the other way around.’

Importantly, some audience members encouraged artists and organisations to invite more community support, as they recuperate from the economic impact of cancellations and lockdowns. One said,

‘Go for it and demand more funding from corporates, governments and donations from the public. Thank you all for surviving so we can enjoy you again.’

What's next

To read about the story so far, visit the study's Australian homepage at: www.thepatternmakers.com.au/covid19.

There, you can also access a dynamic dashboard, to help you explore the results by location, artform and other variables. Instructions and tips for using the dashboard are available in a short video.

To receive future Snapshot Reports, Fact Sheets and resources in your inbox, as soon as they are available, you can opt in to receive Audience Outlook Monitor news at the link above.

If you have a question, or an idea to put forward, relating to this study, you can contact info@thepatternmakers.com.au.

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Patternmakers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of our land — Australia. We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the place where Patternmakers is based, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



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