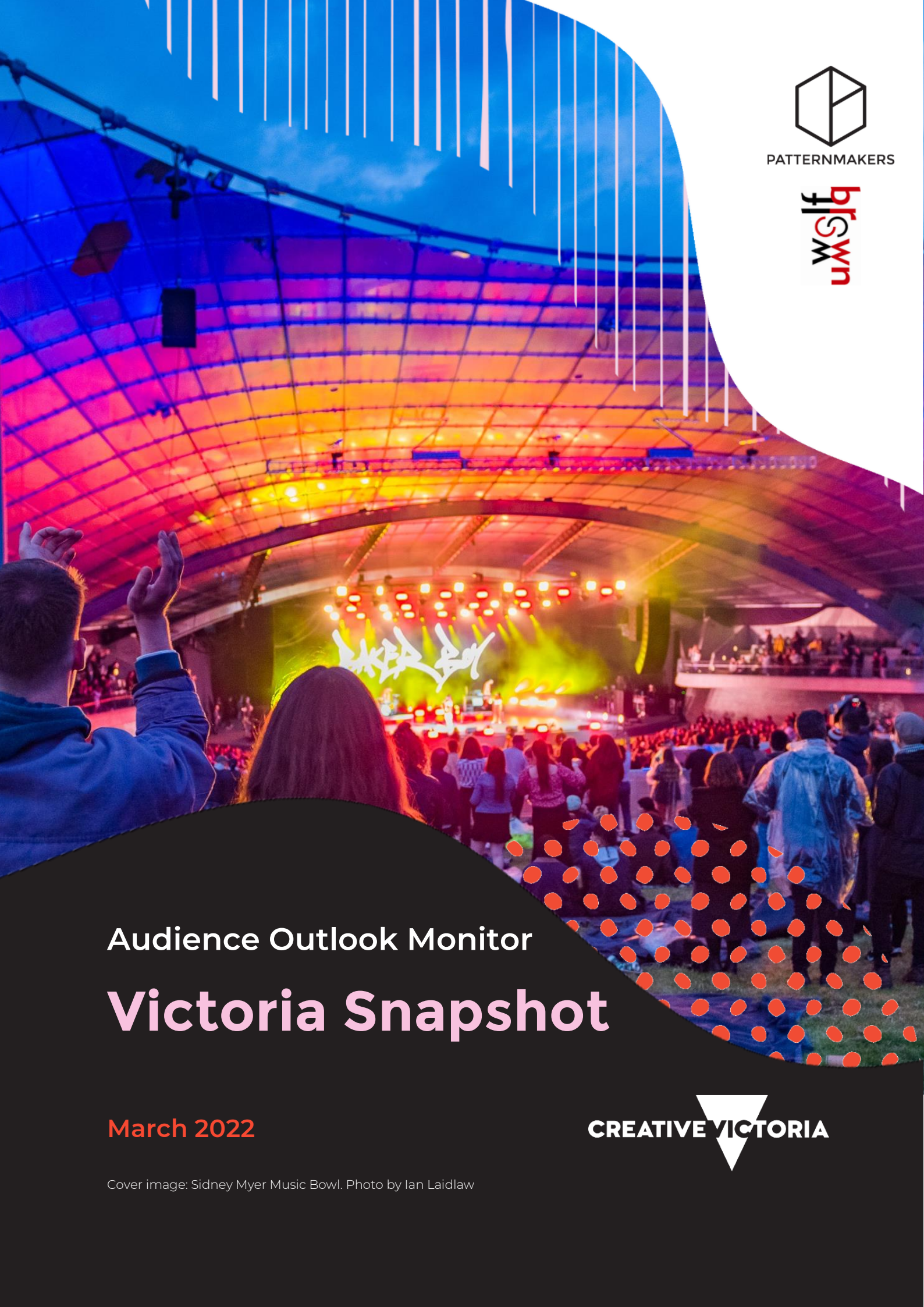




PATTERNMAKERS



Audience Outlook Monitor

Victoria Snapshot

March 2022

CREATIVE VICTORIA

Cover image: Sidney Myer Music Bowl. Photo by Ian Laidlaw

Key Facts: March 2022

Attendance Outlook



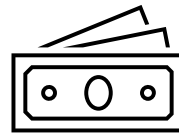
1,848

Victorian arts attendees responded to the March 2022 survey



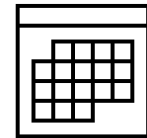
72%

of Victorian audiences are attending in-person events right now



62%

spent \$50 or more on cultural activities in the last fortnight



12%

are making firm plans to attend cultural events interstate

COVID-safety



54%

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



#1

Proof of vaccination is the most encouraging measure



63%

feel encouraged by mandatory masks for attendees aged 12+



90%

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

Key findings: March 2022

7 in 10 Victorian attendees have returned to cultural events, but many are conscious of the risks

- ▶ In March 2022, data from 1,848 past attendees of cultural events in Victoria suggests that attendance levels are increasing again, after case numbers reached a peak in January of this year.
- ▶ In fact, attendance levels in Victoria are at their highest levels in 2 years – jumping from 23% in November 2021 to 72% in March as Victorian audiences recover from last year's lockdowns.
- ▶ 6 in 10 (60%) Victorian audience members say they are ready to attend cultural events 'whenever permitted' (up from 49% in November 2021), while 4 in 10 saying they need to be sure the risks are minimal.
- ▶ While most Victorian audiences have received three shots of a COVID-19 vaccine (90%), many continue to say their attendance is inhibited by the risks of transmission (54%) or being a close contact (42%).
- ▶ Audience concerns remain around transmitting the virus to those at-risk in their community – and 51% identify as being vulnerable to COVID-19 themselves or having someone in their household or network who is.
- ▶ Some audience segments remain especially cautious, particularly those at risk of a serious health outcome (51% ready to attend) and those with a disability (46% ready to attend) – so it will be important for the culture sector to consider varying needs among their audience bases.

Proof of vaccination is the top COVIDSafe measure for Victorian audiences

- ▶ Victorian audiences appear eager to move into the next chapter of the pandemic after being some of the worst-affected by lockdowns. However, some key COVIDSafe measures will continue to play an important role in consolidating confidence.
- ▶ Most of those attending are satisfied overall with COVIDSafe measures applied at recent cultural events they attended (79% satisfied), confirming the view of arts venues as relatively safe spaces.
- ▶ But with 1 in 10 attendees dissatisfied, and more yet to return, there is a need for care as restrictions ease.
- ▶ In line with Victoria's plans to operate as a 'vaccinated economy,' Victorian arts audiences continue to be in favour of vaccination requirements (78% encouraged), with only 8% opposed.
- ▶ Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) isn't an acceptable alternative to proof of vaccination for a sizeable proportion of Victorian audiences – with only 47% encouraged by the option to provide a RAT or proof of vaccine.
- ▶ Nearly two-thirds (63%) are encouraged by mask-wearing despite masks no longer being mandatory – and many still consider the absence of this safety measure a 'dealbreaker'.
- ▶ As state guidelines allow for relaxing of restrictions, and Victorians have the opportunity for greater freedom of movement, cautious audiences will be relying more upon the COVIDSafe policies of individual venues to mitigate the risks of transmission.
- ▶ Some audience members will be looking to cultural organisations to adopt a robust approach to COVIDsafety in order to communicate inclusivity and care for those who are more vulnerable.

Spending and attendance patterns show Victorian audiences are eager to return

- ▶ The data shows that Victorian audiences are optimistic about attending in 2022, with 8 in 10 (83%) making firm plans to attend an in-person cultural event (up from 63% in November 2021).
- ▶ After being hit hard by repeated lockdowns, the live performance sector can expect a boost – with 61% of audiences, up from just 39% in November, making plans to attend a live performance.
- ▶ Victorian arts audiences are reporting the highest spending levels since the pandemic started, with 62% spending more than \$50 in the past fortnight and 38% spending more than \$100. However, full economic recovery is still some way off, and with Winter approaching, cautious optimism is wise.
- ▶ Shorter booking timeframes are still common in the state and most Victorian audiences are making plans for local (69%) or intra-state events (60%) – which are perceived to be less risky.
- ▶ 15% of audiences say their preference for attendance times has changed, with lifestyle changes and COVID-safety concerns both playing a role. There may be a case to review the days and times of events, as many now prefer weekdays and weeknights to weekends.
- ▶ Cultural tourism is beginning to improve, but at this stage audiences are more likely to be travelling within their state (60%) rather than travelling interstate for events (12%).
- ▶ The arts continue to be perceived as vital to community recovery, providing an avenue for healing, joy and social connection during challenging times. 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

This report summarises insights from over 1,800 audience members in Victoria

This Victoria (VIC) Snapshot Report outlines key findings from the March 2022 phase of the Audience Outlook Monitor in Australia (Phase 7), based on data collected from 1,848 audience members living in Victoria.

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.

From 9-14 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 Victoria.

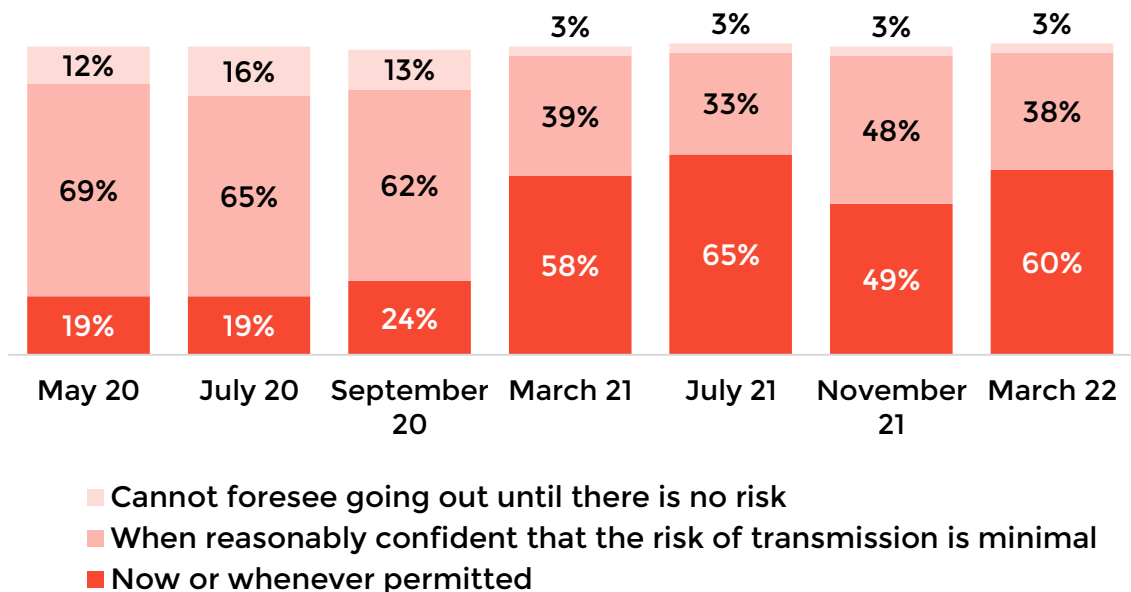
Current conditions

6 in 10 audience members in Victoria are 'ready to attend' now or whenever permitted

With case numbers in Victoria stabilising in early March 2022 after reaching a historic peak in early January, audience confidence has returned to around the same levels of July and March last year.

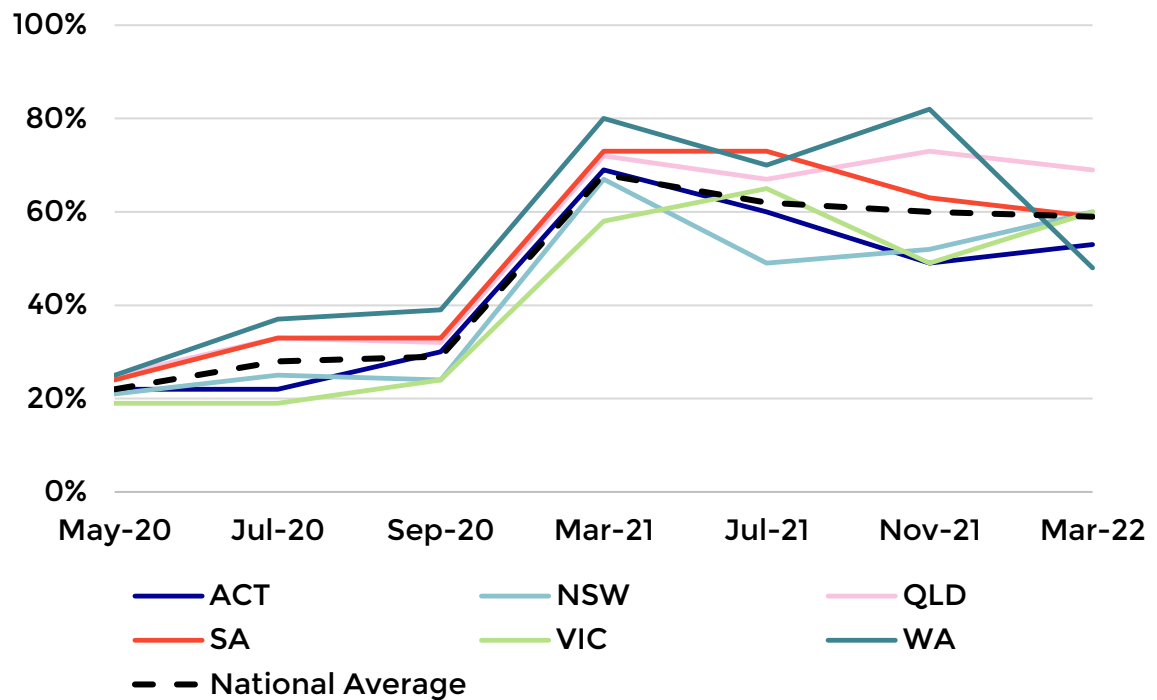
6 in 10 audience members (60%, up from 49% in November 2021) are ready to attend 'now or as soon as permitted', stable with March 2021 (58%) and slightly down from July 2021 (65%) – at which point Victoria had not experienced outbreaks of the Delta or Omicron variants.

Figure 1: Proportion of audiences who are 'ready to attend now or as soon as permitted'. Victorian audiences, May 2020 to March 2021 (n=1,845)



After being slightly below the national average in November, confidence in Victoria is now in line with national sentiment once more (59% 'ready to attend'), 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 2021 (n=8,369)



For the 6 in 10 audience members in Victoria who are 'ready to attend', this confidence appears to come from a willingness to 'live with the virus' – or an eagerness to return to regular attendance after years of disruptions. One said,

'I'm triple vaxxed, and feel like there is minimal risk to me in the community now. I want to get back out into the world and start enjoying Melbourne and all the amazing events that are on. I'm so happy to be able to continue supporting the arts scene.'

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

As some Victorians become more comfortable with the prospect of 'living with the virus,' another 4 in 10 (38%) 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 (51%) of Victorian audience

members answered yes – with 12% vulnerable to a serious health outcome themselves, 15% living with someone vulnerable, and 24% connected to someone vulnerable in their extended/family network.

When asked about their readiness to attend, only 42% of audiences who were themselves vulnerable to a serious health outcome were ready to go to arts and cultural events – along with 51% of audiences who had a vulnerable person in their immediate family/household.

One audience member in this former group said,

‘I am still undergoing cancer treatment and at greater risk than many others. I do not want to be sitting too close to others, with most people unmasked, in an indoor space.’

Readiness to attend also decreases with age, with older audience members more likely to report vulnerability to COVID-19. Audience members over 75 were the least likely to be ready to attend (49%), and audiences under 35 the most likely (69%).

One audience member said,

‘My wife and I are both seniors with chronic conditions, so prefer to be selective about our risk exposure. Now it seems likely that the Omicron sub-variant will increase the risk again.’

Compared to non-disabled audience members (61% ready to attend), audience members with a disability were also less likely to be ready to attend right now (46%).

Comments from audience members in these cohorts suggest some are anxious about being ‘left behind’ as the country reopens – and their needs will be an important consideration for arts organisations going forward. One audience member said,

‘There are currently few options for people who are immune compromised or for those that live with people who are. The only option is to stay safe by isolation and this is obviously limiting in terms of outings and social interaction and work in such environments.’

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

As restrictions ease and case numbers come down from their January peak, comfort with public activities and arts attendance in Victoria is increasing (relative to November 2021), following the same general trends as readiness to attend.

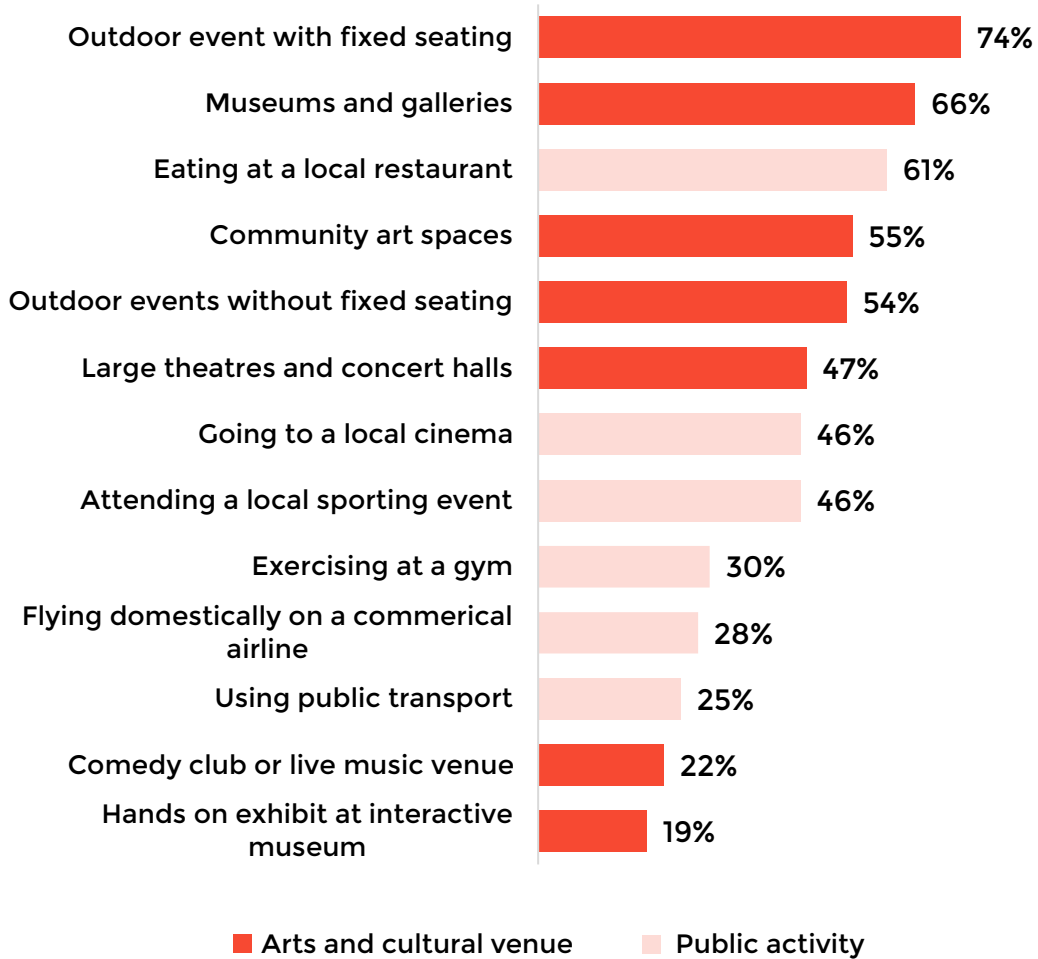
A similar pattern is evident in NSW and the ACT – states which, like Victoria, were recovering from outbreaks of the Delta variant in 2021 when data was collected in November.

Among arts and cultural venues, outdoor venues with fixed seating continue to be perceived as safest – with 74% of audiences ‘very comfortable’ in these environments, up from 70% in November – followed by museums and galleries (66% ‘very comfortable’, up from 56% 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 live music venues, 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 COVIDSafe.

Figure 3: Proportion of audiences 'very comfortable' attending the following public activities and arts and cultural venues. Victorian audiences, March 2022 (n=1, 828)



Live attendance

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

As Victoria adjusts to 'living with COVID', attendance at cultural events has recovered to greater than pre-Delta levels.

In March 2022, 72% of audiences said they attended an in-person cultural event in the fortnight before data collection (9-13 March), a huge jump on November levels (23%). This is, in fact, the highest attendance rate recorded in Victoria since the study began – higher than pre-Delta levels in March 2021 (62%).

Similarly, audiences in NSW and the ACT are also becoming more active following extended lockdowns.

8 in 10 Victorian 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 Victorian audiences are making firm plans to attend arts and cultural events in future.

In March 2022, 8 in 10 (83%) audiences reported making plans for in-person attendance in the future, a big increase on November (63%), when audiences were exercising more caution.

In particular, the proportion of audience members making plans to attend a live performance has increased, from 39% in November 2021 to 61% in March 2022.

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

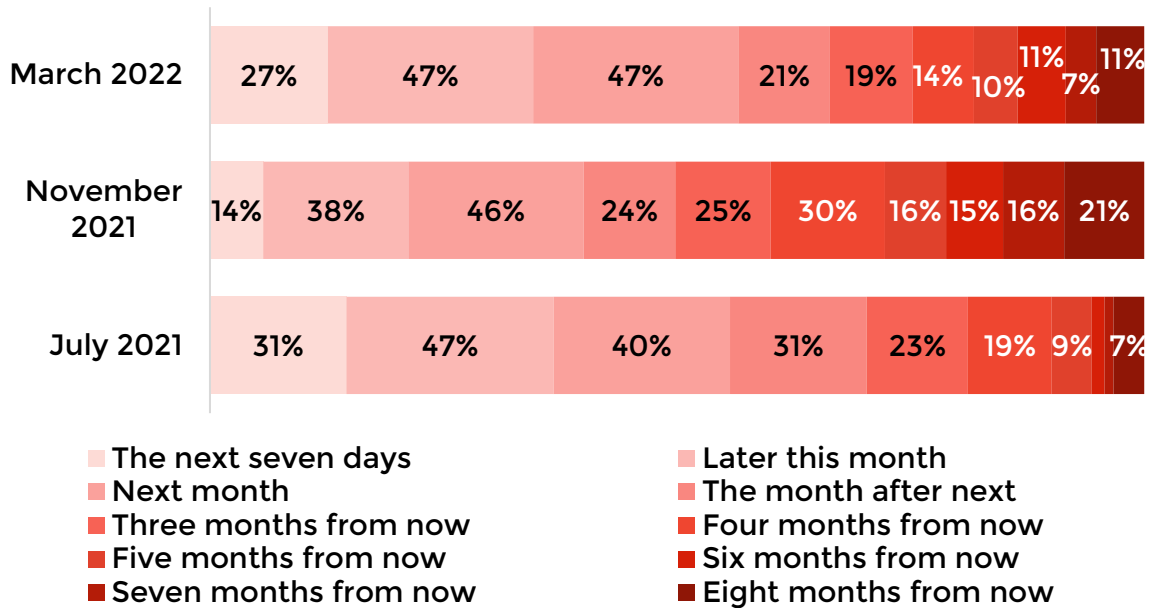
When asked about the timing of scheduled events, Victorian audiences continue to book events in the short term – with the proportion making longer-term bookings down relative to November 2021.

The proportion booking events within the next seven days has increased to 27% in March 2022, up from 14% in November (Figure 4). Meanwhile, the largest proportion of audiences is purchasing tickets to events happening later this month (47%, up from 38% in November), and a similar proportion is booking for next month (47%, stable with 46% in November).

Bookings between three to eight months from now have all decreased, with the greatest decreases in bookings four months from now (14%, down from 30% in November), and eight months from now (11%, down from 21%).

Once again, audiences appear to be favouring short-term planning – with the availability of events post-Summer season, and lingering uncertainty around outbreak conditions, likely playing a role.

Figure 4: In the past fortnight, did you purchase tickets for one or more live shows or performances that are scheduled for...? Victorian audiences, March 2022 (n=987), November 2021 (n=582) and July 2021 (n=847)



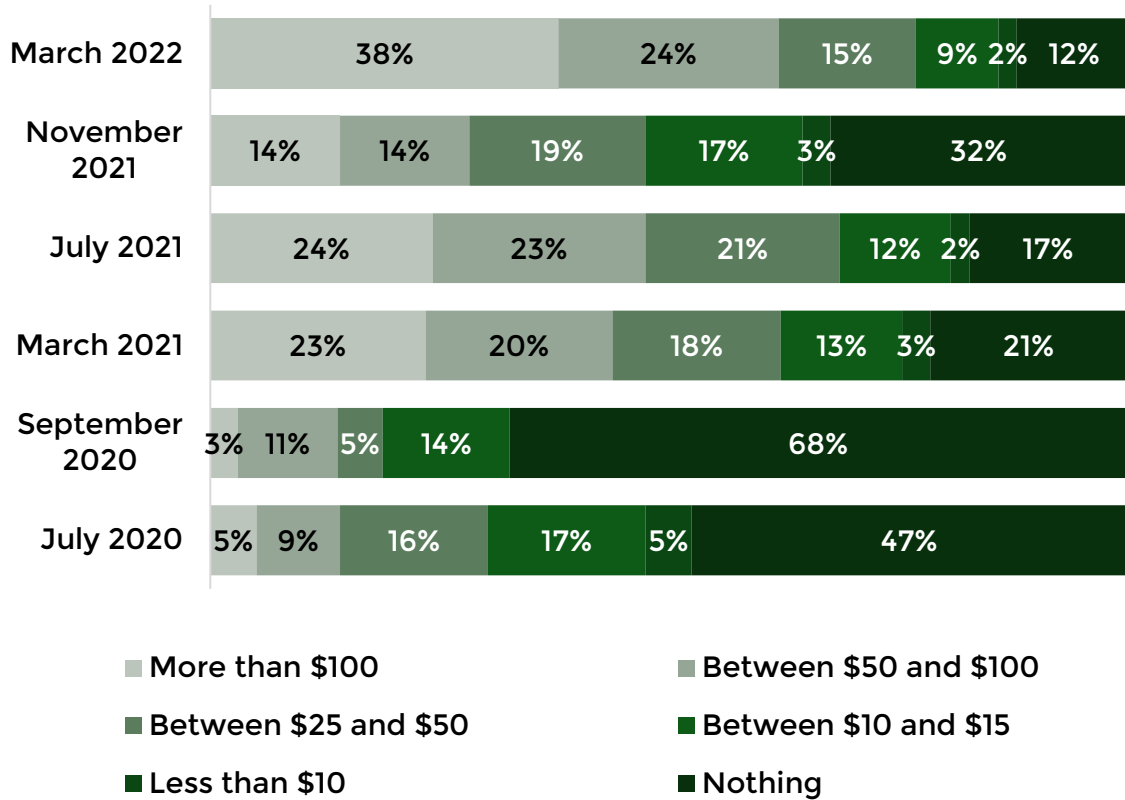
Signs of economic recovery are growing, with Victorian audiences reporting the highest spending levels since the pandemic started

When asked about the amount they have spent on tickets to in-person live events in the last fortnight, Victorian audiences are spending more than they have in the past two years. 6 in 10 (62%) audience members said they have spent more than \$50 (Figure 5).

Spending has increased significantly compared to November, when spending in Victoria was severely suppressed – with only 28% of Victorian audiences spending more than \$50.

March 2022 saw the largest proportion of audiences spending more than \$100 (38%) since the study began, a promising sign of stronger economic recovery of the sector.

Figure 5: In the past fortnight, how much did you spend on tickets to in-person live events and cultural activities? Victorian audiences, March 2022 (n=1,333), November 2021 (n=501), July 2021 (n=1,223), March 2021 (n=2,269), September 2020 (n=37) and July 2020 (n=602).



Cultural tourism is still in the early stages of recovery, with 7 in 10 Victorian 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, with 7 in 10 (69%) saying they made plans to attend an event in their local area. However, another 6 in 10 Victorian audience members (60%) are travelling within their state to attend cultural events.

Along with NSW audiences, Victorian audiences are the most likely to be travelling within their state – compared to just 4 in 10 QLD and WA audience members. It’s possible that extended restrictions in NSW and Victoria have cultivated a greater appetite for travel amongst these audiences.

Interstate cultural tourism remains suppressed, with just 1 in 10 Victorian audience members making plans in another state/territory (12%). In terms of COVID-safety, just 3 in 10 (28%) feel 'very comfortable' flying domestically on a commercial airline.

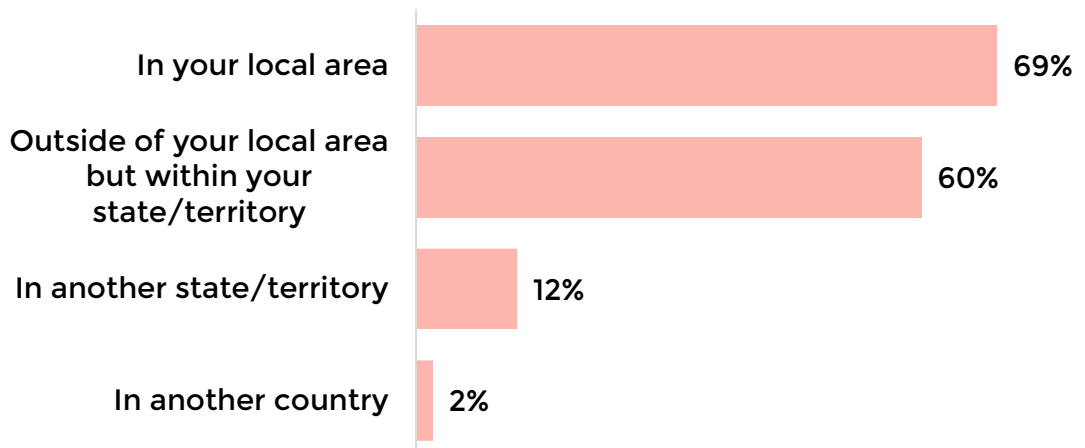
Regional and remote Victorian audiences are more likely to be looking local (77%, compared to 66% of metropolitan audiences) and somewhat less likely to be travelling within Victoria (56%, compared to 63% of metropolitan audiences). Qualitative data from regional audience members suggests some anxiety persists about travelling into more densely-populated areas, with one saying,

'I live in regional Victoria, and am confident about safety in my area. I am not really confident about travelling to Melbourne, far less attending cultural and arts events in Melbourne.'

Another said,

'I live in Geelong and find I'm now only prepared to travel to Melbourne for things I'm REALLY interested in.'

Figure 6: Were those plans for attending a venue or event ... (select multiple). Victorian audiences, March 2022 (n=6,618)



1 in 7 are changing their attendance patterns due to lifestyle changes or COVID-risks

Audiences were asked whether their preferred attendance times had changed, in light of COVID-19. The majority of audiences (75%) say that their preferences have not changed, while 15% say they have. Another 1 in 10 (10%) are not sure.

This rate is higher in Victoria and the other states/territories affected by 2021 outbreaks, NSW (14%) and the ACT (16%) – compared to those in WA (8%), QLD (10%) and SA (11%).

There are mixed views surrounding attendance times. Some audiences report lifestyle changes and work arrangements affecting their decisions, as one person shared,

‘Due to working from home, this changes how easy it is to get to venues around the city. So a bit later on a weekday is helpful.’

Victorian audience members who are more risk-averse are more likely to say their preferred times have changed (21%) compared to those who are ready to attend now (9%). Some expressed a preference for weekday, daytime events – which they expect to have fewer attendees, or where they feel COVID-safety is better upheld. One said,

‘I prefer [events] not to be late, as people at that time may be taking more risks with behaviour.’

Another said,

‘I don't attend popular times, I prefer mornings.’

Others are avoiding peak transport times, for reasons of COVID-safety or mere convenience. One said,

‘[I prefer] times which avoid heavy peak hour public transport travel.’

COVID-safety and vaccination

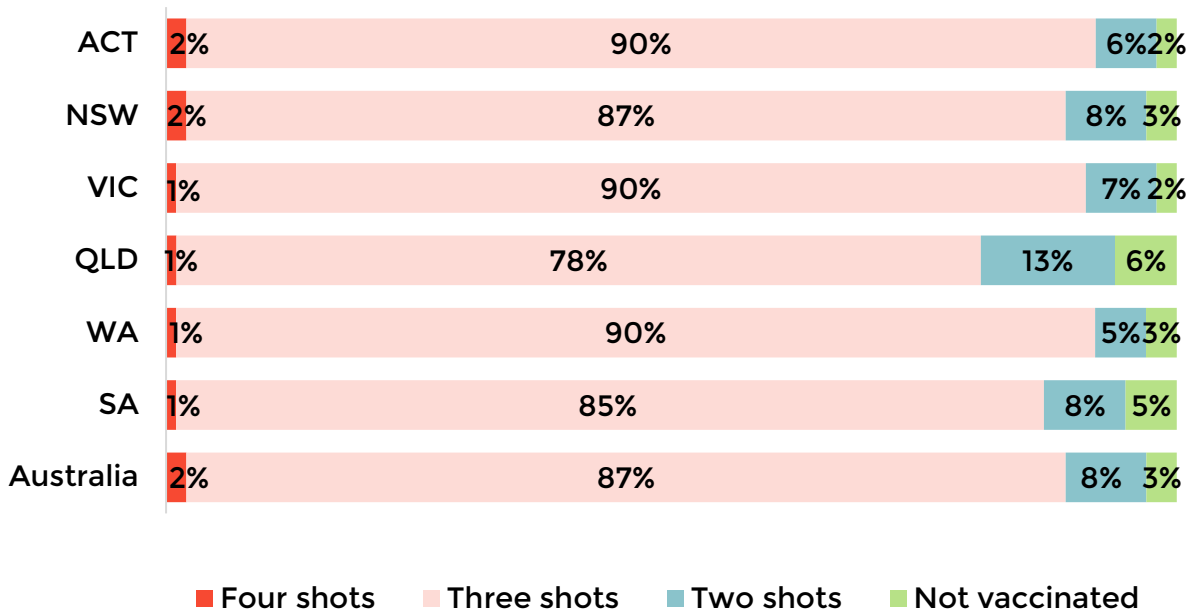
Arts audiences continue to lead the way on vaccination – with 9 in 10 Victorian audience members having received three shots

As of March 22, 90% of Victorian arts audiences have received three shots of the COVID-19 vaccine (up from just 2% in November) – compared to [around 66% of the eligible Victorian population, as of 13 March](#).

Along with audiences in WA and the ACT, Victorian audiences are the most likely to be triple-vaccinated (9 in 10), while audiences in QLD are the least (78%).

Vaccination rates also increase with age, with 94% of audiences aged 75+ having received three shots, compared to 84% of audiences under 35 and 81% of audiences aged between 35 and 54.

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 1 in 10 (11%) Victorian arts audiences say they have. Younger Victorian audiences were more likely to have had COVID-19 than older audiences – with 23% of those under 35 having had the virus, compared to 5% of those aged 75+.

The primary barriers to attendance are 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 Victorian audiences (54%, consistent with 53% in November 2021) as shown in Figure 8. Some

Victorian audiences expressed concern about attending while case numbers remain high, with one saying,

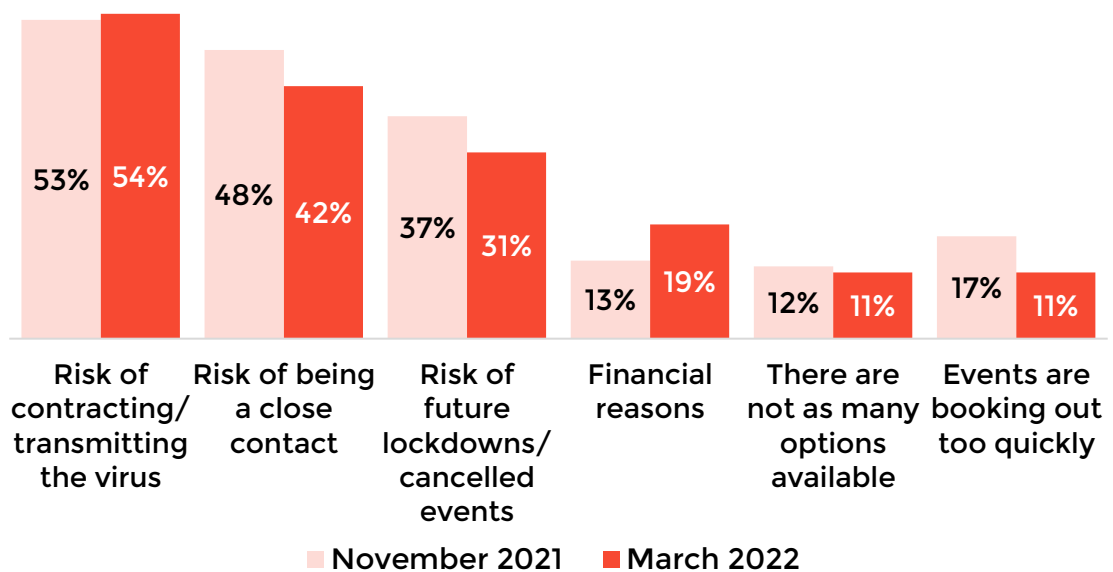
'I'm still being very careful about going out. For me, there is still too much COVID around to attend events.'

With the country entering its [post-vaccination phase of the national policy](#), Victorian audiences are slightly less likely to be concerned about the risk of lockdowns and cancelled events (31%, compared to 37% in November 2021). However, 4 in 10 Victorian audience members (42%) continue to be concerned with the risk of being a close contact and needing to isolate (down from 48% in November 2021) – and note the possibility of events being cancelled for this reason. One said,

'I am currently in home iso with one family member COVID positive. So, right now I am so keen to book tickets to any live shows and music and theatre. Yet, I also have the hesitation of feeling like COVID can stop us again, when another family member becomes positive.'

While in the minority, a larger proportion of Victorian audience members are now naming financial reasons as inhibiting their attendance (19%, up from 13% in November 2021).

Figure 8: Proportion of audiences who say these factors will preventing them from attending in-person arts and culture events as they used to in the past. Victorian audiences, March 2022 (n=8,352) and November 2021 (n=7,583)



Proof of vaccination and masks are the most important COVIDSafe measures for Victorian audiences

Despite changes to outbreak conditions and COVID-19 restrictions since November, measures like masks and vaccination requirements remain priorities for Victorian audiences.

Since November, Victoria has lifted its mask mandates in most indoor settings, but has maintained its ‘vaccinated economy’ policy and continues to require proof of vaccination at arts and cultural venues.

Perhaps because of this, vaccination requirements continue to be the most encouraging COVIDSafe measure for Victorian audiences (78% encouraged), with masks slightly less important (63% encouraged).

For many Victorian audience members, vaccination requirements are a ‘dealbreaker’ or necessary condition for attendance – with one saying,

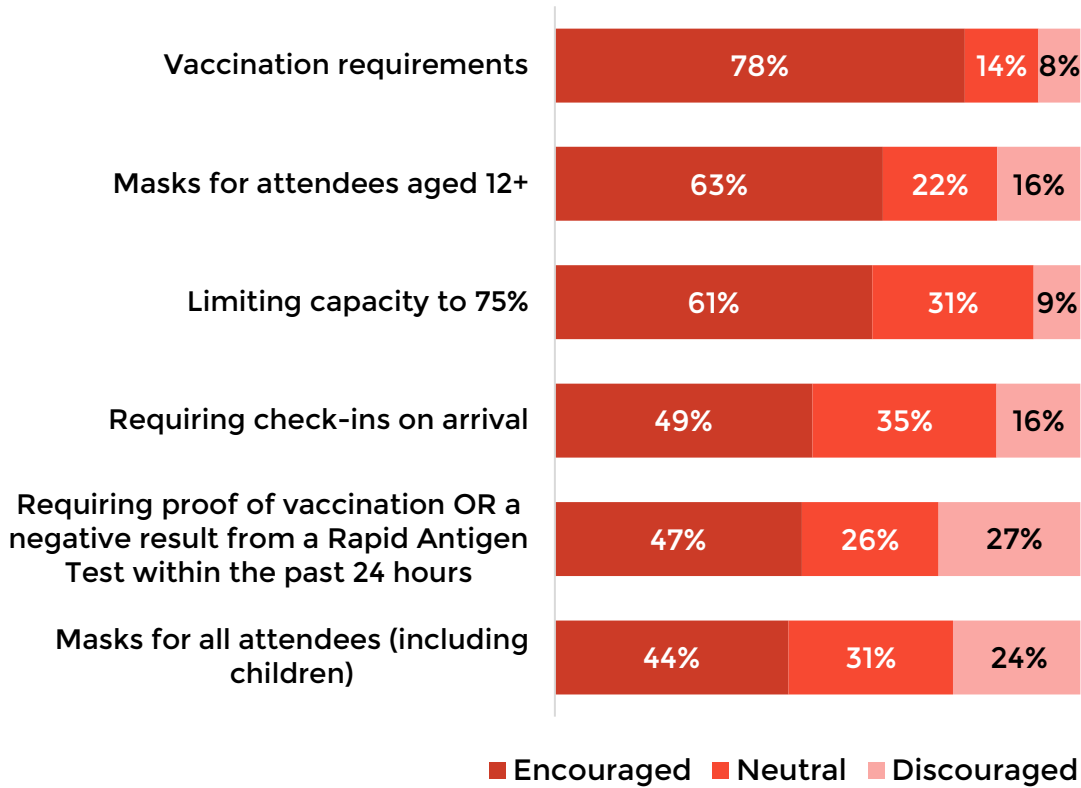
‘While I’m obviously not as comfortable going out as I was 2 years ago, I do feel safer to attend cultural events knowing that everyone has to be vaccinated. I’d be very likely to stop attending events if that requirement was removed. I know it must be a hassle for the organisations, but it’s really our only safety net now that masks are not mandatory.’

Compared to November 2021, however, the proportion of Victorian audiences who say they feel encouraged by proof of vaccination has decreased (78%, down from 85% in November). Rather than becoming more negative about proof of vaccination, Victorian audiences have become more likely to be neutral (14%, up from 7%).

While mask-wearing has become slightly less important to Victorian audiences in the absence of a state-wide mask mandate (63% encouraged, down from 74% in November), some continue to see masks as ‘dealbreakers’. One said,

‘As mentioned, I think the wearing of masks in indoor venues should be obligatory, not optional. Most of the audience at the State theatre did not wear a mask when I attended and few listened to the announcement advising the (optional) wearing.’

Figure 9: How much would each of the following steps discourage or encourage you to attend? Victorian audiences, March 2022 (n=8,288)



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

Despite being one of the most encouraging COVIDSafe measures in November (87% encouraged), now less than half (49%) of Victorian audiences are encouraged by check-ins in March 2022, with another 35% neutral.

Qualitative data from some audience members suggests that high case numbers in Victoria and the decreased viability of contact tracing have made check-ins feel superfluous.

One audience member said,

‘As a former contact tracer I know checking in is 100% useless, because no one is ever being contacted anymore so unless the venue/business states they will contact me if a staff member or

patron tests positive, I see no point to checking in other than for a head count.'

Another said,

'Not sure that checking in or proof of vaccination is really that relevant anymore. No one is following up and with Omicron you are either going to get it or not...'

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

'At the moment, I'd probably avoid events if there were no face masks, no check-in, no measures taken at all to keep a basic health-response in place.'

24-hour rapid antigen testing won't encourage the majority of Victorian audiences

Although proof of vaccination is widely encouraging to Victorian audiences, less than half (47%) are encouraged by the option to provide proof of vaccination OR a rapid antigen test (RAT).

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

'Forgoing required vaccinations and just allowing for a negative RAT would be discouraging for me – rapid tests aren't always accurate when someone doesn't have symptoms, so I would feel safer going to an event that only allowed double-vaxxed people rather than double vaxxed or negative RAT.'

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

'I don't really trust RAT tests as proof as they can be inaccurate and easily scammed. I would say my bare minimum is proof of vaccination.'

8 in 10 of Victorian audiences who attended recently are satisfied with COVIDSafe protocols at arts events

As mentioned previously, arts and cultural venues are generally perceived as COVIDSafe spaces.

When Victorian audience members who had recently attended a cultural event were asked how satisfied they were with the COVIDSafe procedures in place, 8 in 10 (79%) responded that they were satisfied, with only 9% dissatisfied.

Satisfaction was relatively consistent across the states and territories, but highest in WA (84%), and lowest in NSW (77%).

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

Compared to November 2021, Victorian audiences are slightly less likely to be 'very confident' that the vaccination effort will allow normal activities to resume within a year (38%, down from 45%) – and slightly more likely to be 'somewhat confident' (53%, up from 48%). The proportion 'not at all confident' remains stable (9%, stable with 7% in November).

Confidence levels in Victoria are higher than those of some of the other states, such as SA (33%) and the ACT (32%).

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

'I got Omicron a week after my booster and it's been rough; I'm annoyed that I got it after two years of sacrifice and I'm annoyed at how contraction/infection has been diminished to just a flu.'

Another said,

'I would like to see continued mitigation like masks alongside vaccination.'

The possibility of new variants on the horizon is also a factor for many audience members, with one saying, 'A new strain of COVID could change everything.'

Role of arts in recovery

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

Looking ahead over the next 12 months, Victorian audiences are most interested in engaging with the same kinds of cultural activities they used to attend pre-pandemic (89%).

Light-hearted content continues to be more attractive to audiences (42%), compared to works that help to make sense of the pandemic (12%) – a trend that has remained consistent throughout the study. The proportion that disagrees that they'll be attracted to works that make sense of the pandemic has increased slightly since November (46%, up from 42%).

Some Victorian audience members referenced other social, political and environmental issues in their responses – suggesting that while they might not be interested in 'pandemic art', art may have a role to play in addressing other current events. One said,

'I do not need performances/exhibitions that make sense of the pandemic, but others might. We need ... to address climate change, refugees, equality for women and a decrease in violence in the home. The 'arts' can assist by addressing these important issues.'

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

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

Audiences shared a vision for arts and culture to provide avenues for healing, joy and escapism. As one audience member said,

‘Do what you do best; perform! The pleasure of performance for both performers and audience is so heart-warming. We all need stimulation, aesthetic, emotional and intellectual.’

Another said, ‘I think a return to what we had prior to the pandemic would be the most important role – healing from this protracted malaise.’

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

‘Artists play an integral role for a community to come together and to process, heal and move forward [...] I think things that connect us to our shared humanity could be beneficial to focus on rather than the bleakness of the past few years.’

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 Victorian 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 Victorian audience member said,

‘[Create] events that help to create connection – to others, to nature and to Country. Events that encourage empathy and support the vulnerable among us (including creating COVIDSafe events so those who are immune compromised or at risk can still enjoy themselves).’

Another suggested,

‘Anything that fosters a sense of community would be super useful to me right now, as being more wary than many about COVID safety has only increased feelings of isolation.’

Many audiences members see a role for the sector to facilitate trust and mutual respect between organisers, artists and attendees, and the broader community. One Victorian audience member commented,

‘There are very vulnerable people in the community who still want to participate in community events, however this causes a high degree of anxiety due to their underlying chronic health issues. I think this needs to be remembered and maybe consider how these people can be accommodated.’

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

Victorian 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,

‘Your performances inspire us, take us to unimaginable realms, comfort us, create beauty, deepen our understanding, broaden our perspective. You are essential to our lives.’

Another said, ‘Keep creating and performing. The community needs you now more than ever!’

Importantly, some audience members encouraged artists and organisation to invite more community support, as they recuperate from the economic impact of cancellations and lockdowns. One said, ‘Thank you! And please let us know how the rest of us can support our artists who do so much for us.’

Another shared, ‘Everyone needs to support our local regional and national artists and cultural organisations – they have done it really hard over the past two years. We need to maintain and continue to develop this part of our economy and our culture!’

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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