



TEN 2020 TRENDS THAT WILL IMPACT THE ARTS

As we turned the corner into 2020, the Americans for the Arts staff put our heads together to come up with 10 big trends that we think are worth paying attention to this year. Some of them you'll surely already know about—it is an election year, after all! But others of them may surprise you.

Together, these ten trends will inform Americans for the Arts' next strategic planning process, which will occur this year to drive work from 2021 to 2023.

Email clord@artsusa.org if you have trends that you think we need to be thinking about.

1

Demographics in the United States are changing faster than ever.

As a nation, we're becoming older, working and living longer, using the internet and social media at a higher rate, and becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. For example, today's population of 330 million is [expected to reach](#) 400 million by 2058. [Every day](#), 10,000 Americans turn 65 and by 2034 there will be more people over 65 than under 18.

In 2045, the U.S. will [pass a milestone](#) and, for the first time since the founding of the modern United States, the percentage of the population that is white will fall below 50 percent. Multiracial, Asian, and Hispanic populations are expected to grow by 176 percent, 93 percent, and 86 percent, respectively.

The population is [clustering in urban areas](#) (84 percent!) and 79 percent of all people in the U.S. now [use social media](#).

Meanwhile, approximately 19 million Americans—6 percent of the population—still [lack access to fixed broadband service](#) at threshold speeds, mostly in rural areas.

2 What we care and worry about is changing—and staying the same.

Whether you're talking about the general population, mayors, or corporations, the top things they care about are important to know. Data from Ipsos's "[What Worries](#)" reports from 2016 to 2019 shows that what worries people in the United States is changing. In 2019, the public's generally high concern around healthcare reached a new high, and concern about immigration also spiked. Meanwhile, concerns about terrorism and crime and violence decreased, while concerns about climate change increased. [Mayors](#) are focused on these top issues, in order, for 2019: economic development and budgetary health, changing demographics, access to education, a healthy infrastructure, concerns about environment, health, public safety, housing, and data and technology.

Usage of tools such as the [Arts + Social Impact Explorer](#) to explain the impact of the arts in non-arts sectors are on the rise, and advocates continue to gain traction as an avenue to achieving desired policy outcomes. For example, in K-12 landscapes, new research advocates for arts education as a vehicle for [social and emotional learning](#). Outside of K-12, we see system-involved youth being supported through [arts-based juvenile justice programs](#) like the strategies pursued by organizations like the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention and Carnegie Hall's [Create Justice](#) initiative.

3

The creative economy is on the rise.

Individuals have always employed their creativity in many industries, but now, better understanding of the importance of creativity, better data capture, and a general desire for future-proofing (47 percent of workers in the United States have jobs at [high risk for automation](#)—but creativity-based jobs are harder to automate!), are driving a rising interest in the creative economy. In a 2018 public opinion study by Americans for the Arts, “55 percent of employed adults say their job requires them to “be creative and come up with ideas that are new and unique.” An even greater proportion (60 percent) say that the more creative and innovative they are at their job, the more successful they are in the workplace.”

The entire U.S. arts and culture sector (nonprofit, commercial, education) was an \$804 billion industry in 2016. This represents 4.3 percent of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—a larger share of the economy than transportation, agriculture, or construction—according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The arts and cultural sector supported 5 million jobs in 2016, up from 4.9 million in 2015, and boasted a \$25 billion international trade surplus in 2016. Artists comprise 1.6 percent of the U.S. workforce (2.55 million workers), per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics—continuing a steady trajectory upward. The unemployment rate for artists dropped from 4.0 percent in 2017 to 2.7 percent in 2018. Medical research, computer programming, finance, and engineering are just a few of the enormous non-arts sectors that require creativity. Both business leaders and members of the workforce tout the importance of creativity to their success. Creativity is among the top 5 applied skills sought by business leaders, per the Conference Board’s *Ready to Innovate* report—with 72 percent saying creativity is of high importance when hiring.

4

We're living through a moment of profound uncertainty and distrust.

[Confidence in institutions](#)—particularly Congress, television news and other media, and organized religion—has hit a low. In other circumstances, such as the Presidency, measures of trust reveal our [profound political divide](#), with almost equal percentages indicating significant trust and complete lack of trust.

The erosion of “truth,” particularly in the context of news and media, has significantly impacted Americans. According to [Pew](#), “More Americans view made-up news as a very big problem for the country than identify terrorism, illegal immigration, racism and sexism that way.” Sixty-eight percent of U.S. adults say fake news directly impacts their confidence in government, and more than half say that distrust also extends to their relationships with other people. They generally think this distrust needs to be fixed by journalists, and believe it’s going to get worse before it gets better.

This same uncertainty extends to the financial system. Is a stock market correction coming? When and for how long? There is consensus that a correction is coming; the key question is how severe it will be and how long it will last. The ripple effects of a bear market on giving overall would be negative across the board, just as it was in 2008. Anticipating this looming correction is starting to be visible among individuals and institutions who are shoring up rainy day funds, spending less, and saving more.

5

Climate change is top-of-mind—at least for now.

Outlandish weather shifts, major natural disasters, and the rising prominence of a young corps of climate activists, including *Time* Person of the Year Greta Thunberg, have converged to bring new light and new urgency to issues of climate change—and it's making it hard for corporations and foundations to [keep business as usual](#).

While philanthropic dollars going towards climate change continue to [lag behind](#) other social issues, a [2018 pledge](#) by 28 foundations to collaborate on climate solutions has now topped \$4 billion in funding. On the arts front, this increased awareness is leading to an uptick in interest from local arts agencies and other community arts organizations interested in learning how to use arts to highlight climate change issues and spark conversation and the mounting of arts-centered climate change initiatives in highly impacted places like Miami.

Artists such as [Ólafur Eliasson](#), [Xavier Cortada](#) and 19-year-old artist-activist [Xuihtezcatl Martinez](#) are producing impactful works highlighting the climate crisis and raising awareness.

6

The arts sector is demonstrably, if slowly, shifting towards equity.

Arts and culture organizations are, in some cases, experiencing different types of shifts towards equity, and are grappling with them. Major cultural institutional leadership has begun to turn over more rapidly, and we're [seeing notable hires](#) of people from historically and currently marginalized communities.

Meanwhile, emerging out of the museum community, new [efforts to unionize](#) are picking up, with very disparate responses ranging from [concern](#)-followed-by-[eventual-acceptance](#) of the union to [total closure](#) of the institution. In the theatre space, in addition to a longer term effort to track productions by female-identifying playwrights, a new [public Google doc](#) tracked the departures and hires at senior levels in theatre spaces and caused [quite a stir](#).

Finally, a strong push in the field for pay transparency—particularly in job descriptions—emerged first from the [blogger Vu Le](#) and then from the Arts Administrators of Color Network, and has been making the rounds. Meanwhile, we continue to receive calls with questions whether related to RFPs for consultants, data, peer benchmarking or individual coaching, how to integrate equity into grantmaking, board diversity and cultural consciousness, hiring practices, and marketing and communications.

7

A fight is looming over who gets counted and who gets to vote.

As the pending 2020 presidential election comes more strongly into focus, with all of the attendant deep political division, skepticism about the legitimacy of the 2016 election, and rising vitriol among the American public, it's shaping up to be a challenging year for anyone who cares about or will be affected by politics—which is to say, basically everyone. Issues of voter rights, voter suppression, and the striking of names from voter rolls have taken on new urgency, with fights playing out at the state level and in the courts.

For every [story](#) of voter rights restored, [another story](#) comes out about top-tier efforts to keep people—particularly people of color in contested states and districts—from voting. There are [hundreds of thousands of votes](#) at stake.

Many organizations—including many [arts groups](#)—are stepping up to register voters and encourage civic participation with creative voter drives. Gerrymandering is also a strong trend for 2020, as [states](#) and [courts](#) dive into fights over whether the redistricting of voters in ways that dilute the power of a voting bloc are legal. Following a Supreme Court decision in 2019, partisan gerrymandering efforts have [redoubled in 2020](#)—and political heavyweights [including Barack Obama](#) are stepping up to fight them.

Meanwhile, 2020 is also a Census year, and [experts are concerned](#)—despite a Supreme Court decision disallowing a question related to citizenship status that many feared would be used to pursue undocumented immigrants—that people of color and immigrants will be undercounted, thereby affecting political maps, funding, and many other important components of community life for the next decade. [Arts groups are responding](#) with major initiatives, as are other community groups.

8

The ways that dollars flow to arts and culture are changing.

Government dollars are up, private philanthropic dollars are stagnant (and access to them is shifting), and we're seeing [troubling trends](#) in individual philanthropy following reformations to U.S. tax law that have made it harder to get tax credit for charitable gifts.

Reeling from political attempts to destroy aspects of the social safety net and a late-blooming but genuine drive to begin centering equity and addressing systemic bias both within the philanthropy field and in American society, foundations have shown a marked [shift toward the local](#) and away from national institutions, service organizations, and the broad/long-term/multi-site transformative projects they do. This is happening [beyond the arts](#) as well. Program officers have reported both pressure and a desire to “cut out the middleman,” and even national funders have pivoted to direct grants to individuals, specific investments in single- or few-site projects, and both explicit and implicit preference to fund equity by funding people of color- or other historically-marginalized-community-led organizations.

In 2020, NEA, state, and local government funding to their arts agencies are expected to increase. Federal appropriations to the National Endowment for the Arts will increase to \$162.5 million in 2020, state legislative arts appropriations are expected to hit \$459 million in FY2020 (+24 percent), and local arts agency funding will continue a steady 3 percent growth towards an expected \$912 million in 2020. On the private side, according to Giving USA, giving to the arts by individuals, foundations, and corporations grew only slightly (and was down when adjusted for inflation). And in 2018, individual giving declined for the first time in 5 years (-3.4 percent)—and fell below 70 percent of all giving for the first time since 1954. The share of the population making any kind of charitable contribution has declined steadily since 2002 (68 to 55 percent)—a trend that will likely continue following the 2017 Tax Cut and Job Act (TCJA).

9 Artists are uniting to exert political power—and succeeding. Artist collectives are forming powerful political bodies which are eliciting great work and manifesting political, organizational, and field shifts. The For Freedoms billboards activations invite artists to use the tools of art and advertising to encourage civic engagement. They believe that if artists’ voices replace advertising, public discourse will become more nuanced.

The Turner Prize’s jury awarded all four finalist artists as a collective. A speech read from the stage on behalf of all four artists, said they felt their work — which involves collaborating with other artists and members of the public — was “incompatible with the competition format, whose tendency is to divide and individualize.”

Days after eight artists left the Whitney Biennial, Warren B. Kandors, a vice chairman of the Whitney Museum of American Art, stepped down after months of protests over his company’s sale of tear gas.

Similarly, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other museums have said they would stop accepting gifts from members of the Sackler family associated with the maker of OxyContin, after allegations that the company deliberately concealed its addictive potential and museums in Britain have faced pressure to cut ties with the oil company BP, which has been accused of contributing to the climate crisis. And the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery are now the National Museum of Asian Art after pressure to change the name.

10

Data is driving the conversation about arts education more than ever before.

Each year more states can gather data on K-12 arts education access, and able to use the collected data to drive efforts towards equity in arts education access. These efforts are exposing [critical gaps in access](#) particularly in lower-income communities, despite some state policies that require arts education as part of a well-rounded education.

Using statewide data helped make gains in access through successful advocacy efforts in [New Jersey](#), which announced universal access to arts education this September, becoming the first state to do so. And late in the year, an unnoticed [core set of data](#) on availability and consumption of arts education came to light, which promises to drive new efforts to advocate for, and track, the availability of arts education for all students.