

# CULTURE + COMMUNITY IN A TIME OF TRANSFORMATION

## Focus on Massachusetts: **Western MA**

A regional companion to the MA state report

March 2022

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# Research Context & Questions

Culture & Community in a Time of Transformation: Focus on MA–Western MA is a specialized regional report authored by Slover Linett Audience Research & commissioned by the Barr Foundation. This report extends the learnings from the Massachusetts statewide report, which is itself a separate exploration from the National Culture & Community research reports. For more information on the research methodology and the state and national reports, please visit [www.sloverlinett.com/cctt](http://www.sloverlinett.com/cctt)

This report offers key findings from the Culture & Community research fielded from April 5 to April 30, 2021 – one year into the Covid-19 pandemic but before the emergence of the Delta variant. Guiding questions for this research include:

- How could cultural organizations support their communities in MA during such unprecedented times? What kind of changes do people want to see among arts and culture organizations in the future?
- How have patterns of engagement with arts and culture shifted in MA? What roles could the arts, creativity, community engagement, and other forms of culture play in the hard work ahead?
- To what extent do people believe systemic racism is present in MA arts or culture organizations?
- Do MA residents want arts or culture organizations to address social issues in their communities? If so, which ones?

# What Distinguishes This Study



## Community Centered

This research centers a representative sample of Massachusetts residents rather than focusing *just* on cultural attenders. The survey was translated into nine languages to increase accessibility for non-English speakers.



## Large Scale

We collected more than 8,000 responses from people across the state of Massachusetts with 673 responses from the Western MA, specifically. Nationally, we collected more than 75,000 responses.



## National Implications

A national benchmark allows us to identify where Massachusetts residents are similar and different compared to response patterns across the country.



## Open Access

We believe that transparency and access are critical to this crisis-response work, and we've made all materials publicly available including research instruments, data tables, and the underlying dataset. Find more information at: <https://sloverlinett.com/cctt/>

# Survey Methodology for Massachusetts

## Panel Survey

- We partnered with NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel to collect responses from a sample representative of all MA residents
- We collected 507 responses with an oversample from specific racial/ethnic groups (Asian or Pacific Islander, Black /African American, & Hispanic or Latinx)
- We weighted this data to be representative of all MA residents



## Organizational List Survey

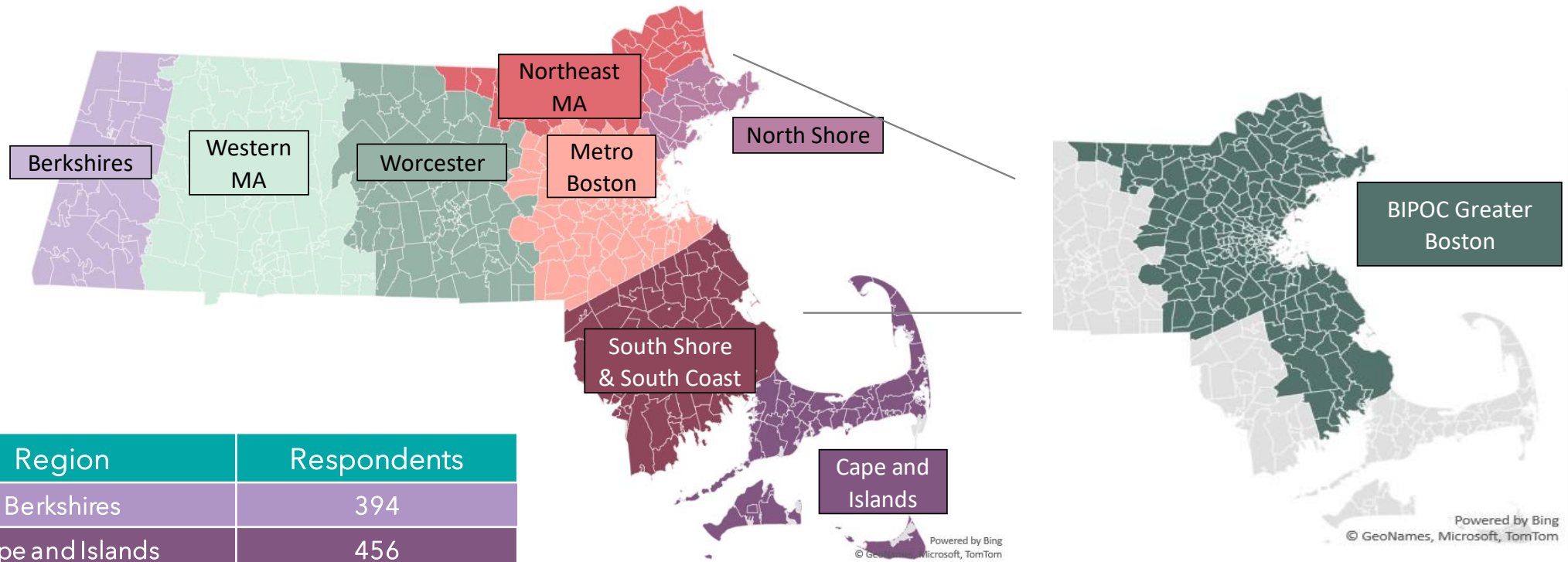
- We collected 7,309 responses through the email lists of arts or culture organizations based in Massachusetts
  - Ninety-one organizations from MA shared the same survey with a portion of their lists
- An additional 617 responses came from MA residents who took the survey from organizations outside of MA



## Combined Sample (Panel + List) Weighted to Represent MA Residents Overall

We combined the data and weighted the entire set of responses (n=7,816) to be representative of all MA residents

# Regional Breakdown



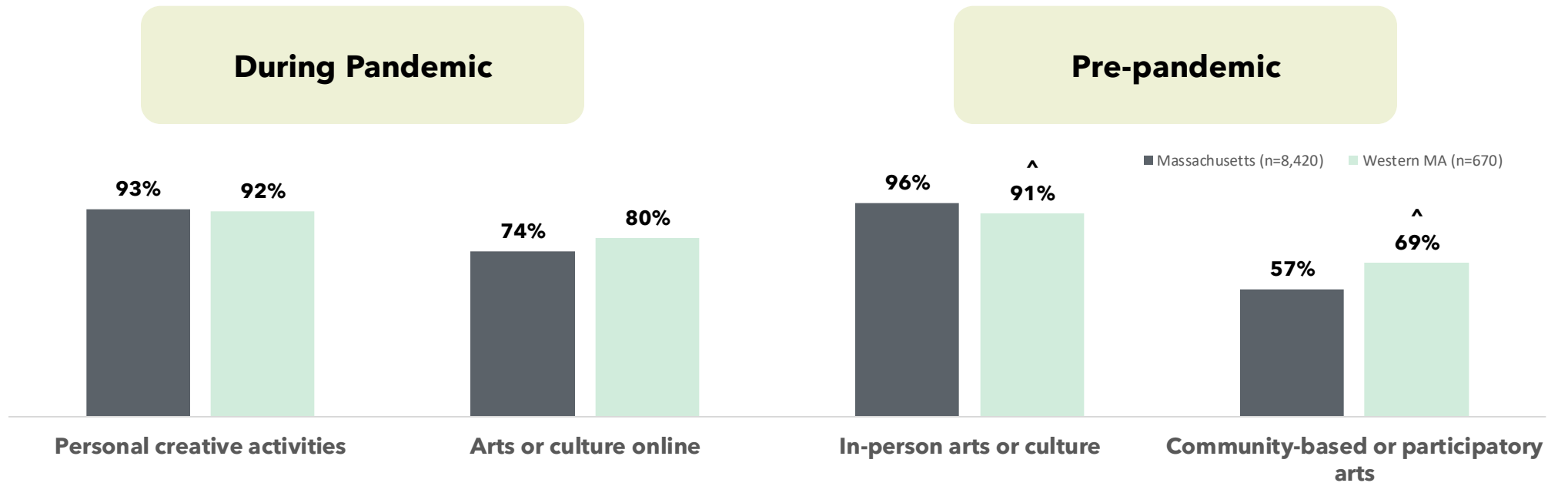
Region	Respondents
Berkshires	394
Cape and Islands	456
North Shore	522
Metro Boston	3,919
Northeast MA	719
South Coast & South Shore	814
Western MA	673
Worcester	954
BIPOC Greater Boston*	935

\* BIPOC Greater Boston includes respondents in the census-designated Boston-Cambridge-Newton statistical area with the following proportions: American Indian or Alaska Native (2%), Asian or Pacific Islanders (33%), Black or African American (28%), Hispanic or Latinx (31%), and Multi-racial (5%)

## DETAILED FINDINGS

# INTEGRATION OF ARTS & CULTURE INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES

**Arts & culture are deeply integrated into people's lives across all regions of Massachusetts. Online engagement with arts and culture in Western MA is a little higher than in the state as a whole.**



**ARTS ENGAGEMENT IS ALIVE AND WELL IN MASSACHUSETTS**

Q1. Have you been doing any of the following creative activities during the past year? Please select ALL that apply.

Q5. Have you done any online arts or culture activities or events over the past year? This might have been via your computer, a streaming service, mobile phone or tablet. Please select ALL that apply.

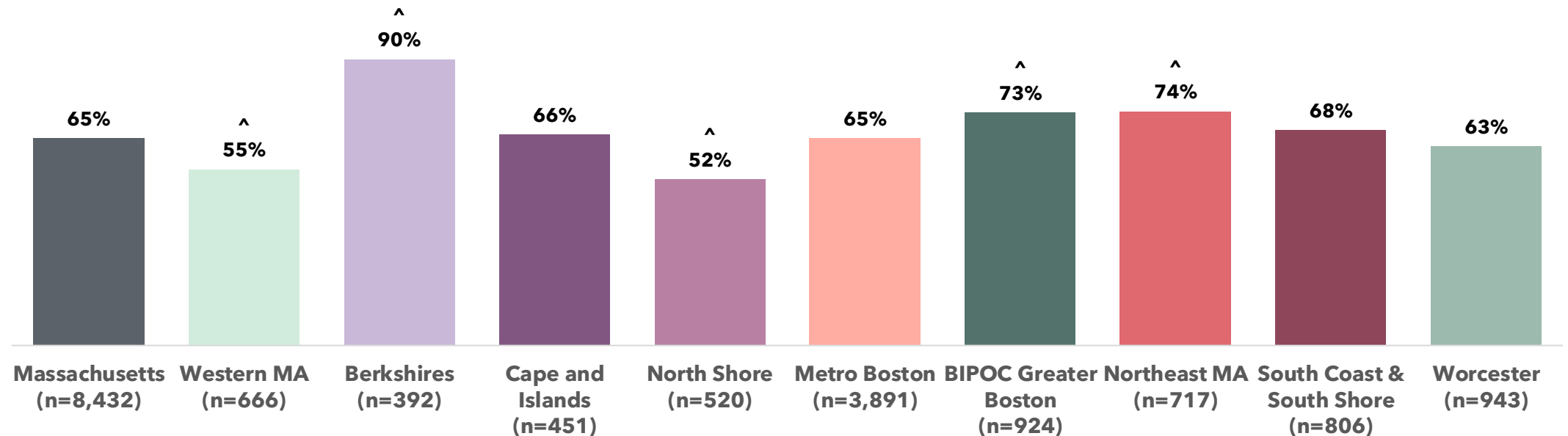
Q13. Have you done any of the following activities in person in the past few years (before or during the pandemic)? Please select ANY that you did at least once in the past few years.

Q11. People can be involved in culture, creativity and community in many different ways. Have you done any of the following types of participatory activities in the past few years (before or during the pandemic)? Please select ALL that apply.

<sup>^</sup> indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level



# Arts and culture organizations are quite important to Massachusetts residents—although slightly less so among Western MA residents.



## IMPORTANCE OF ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS

Q23. In general, how unimportant or important are arts or culture organizations to you, personally. (Top 2 Box: Those that selected "Strongly agree")

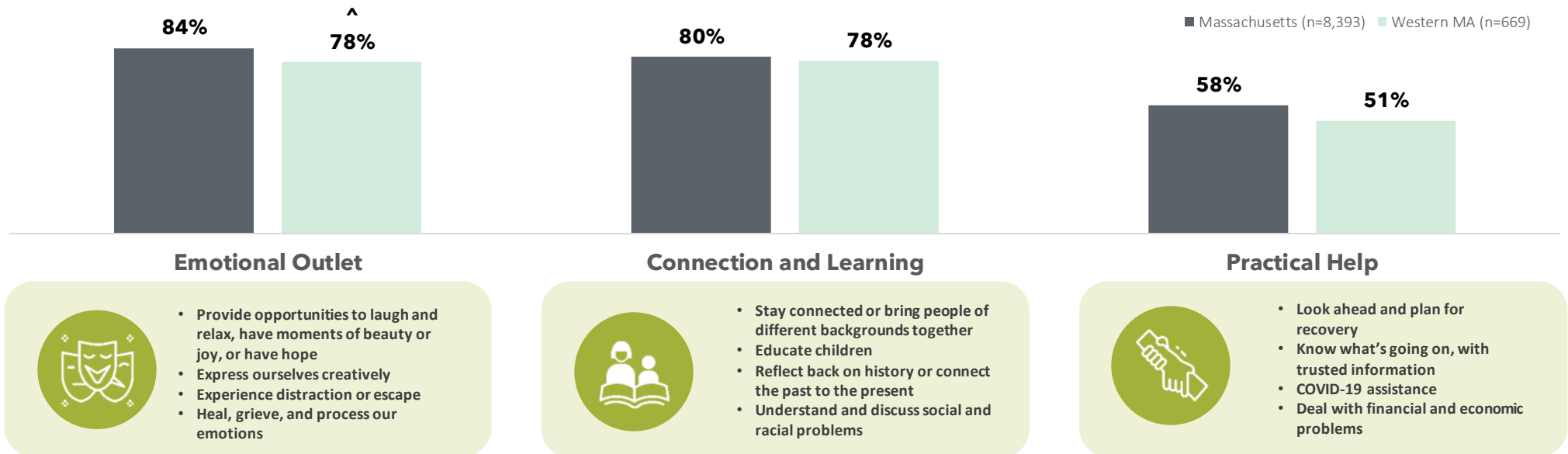
^ indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level

## DETAILED FINDINGS

# A STRONG CASE FOR CHANGE

# Most MA and Western MA residents wanted to see arts organizations help their communities by providing a place for emotional outlet and connection.

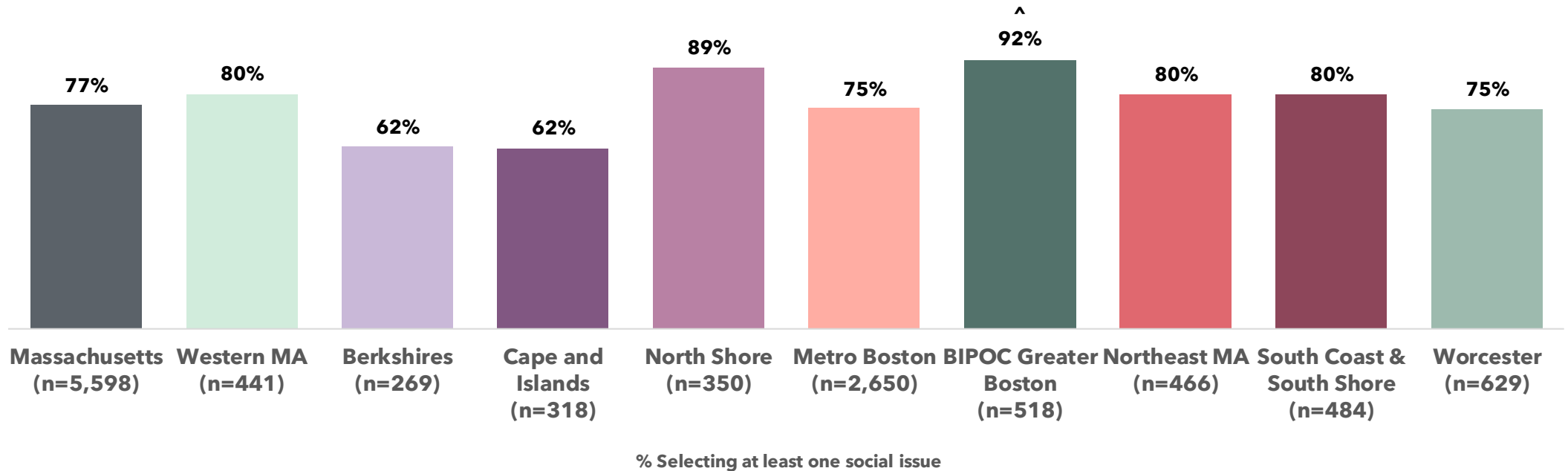
- Although only a third of Western MA (34%) residents had heard of arts or culture organizations helping their communities over the past year—similar to Massachusetts as a whole (35%).



## THREE WAYS ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS CAN HELP THEIR COMMUNITIES

Q21. How would you want arts or culture organizations to help your community during times like these? Please check ALL that apply. Help my community...

# Most MA residents (77%)—and Western MA residents (80%)—want to see arts & culture organizations address social issues.



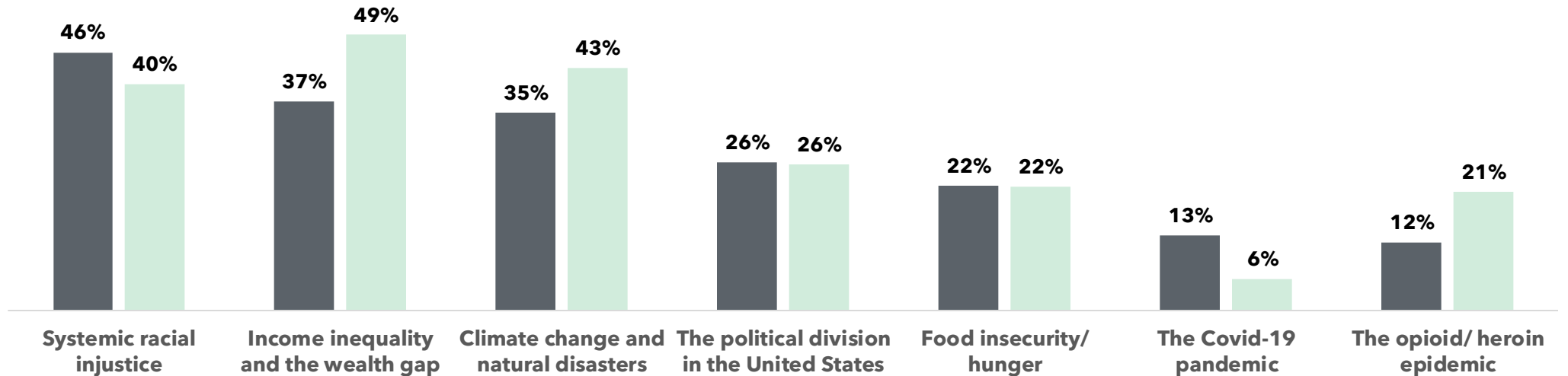
## ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES

Q48. Which of the following social issues (if any) do you think arts or culture organizations should address? Please select up to THREE or tell us in your own words.

<sup>^</sup> indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level

# Income inequality or the wealth gap was the top issue Western MA residents wanted to see arts and culture organizations address, followed by climate change and systemic racial injustice.

- Statewide, systemic racial injustice was the top issue people wanted arts and culture organizations to address at 46%, followed by income inequality at 37% and climate change at 35%.



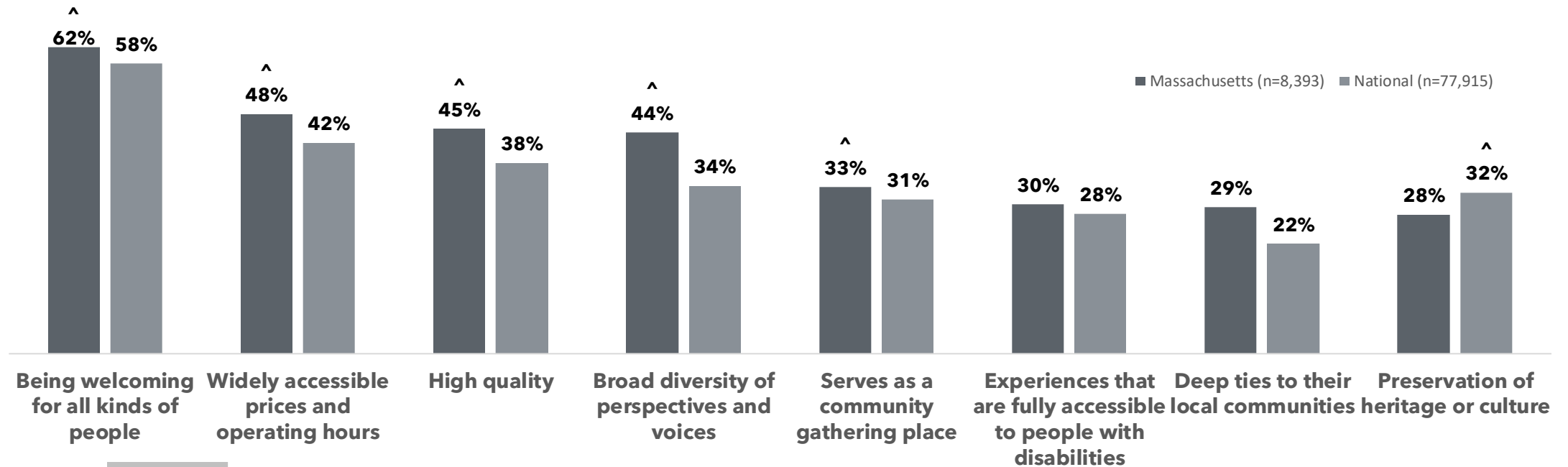
## ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES

■ Massachusetts (n=5,598) ■ Western MA (n=441)

Q48. Which of the following social issues (if any) do you think arts or culture organizations should address? Please select up to THREE or tell us in your own words.

# Most MA residents value arts and culture organizations that are welcoming to all kinds of people and offer a broad diversity of perspectives and voices.

- In MA, the desire for broad diversity of perspectives and voices is a great deal more prevalent than it is nationally (44% MA vs 34% nationally).

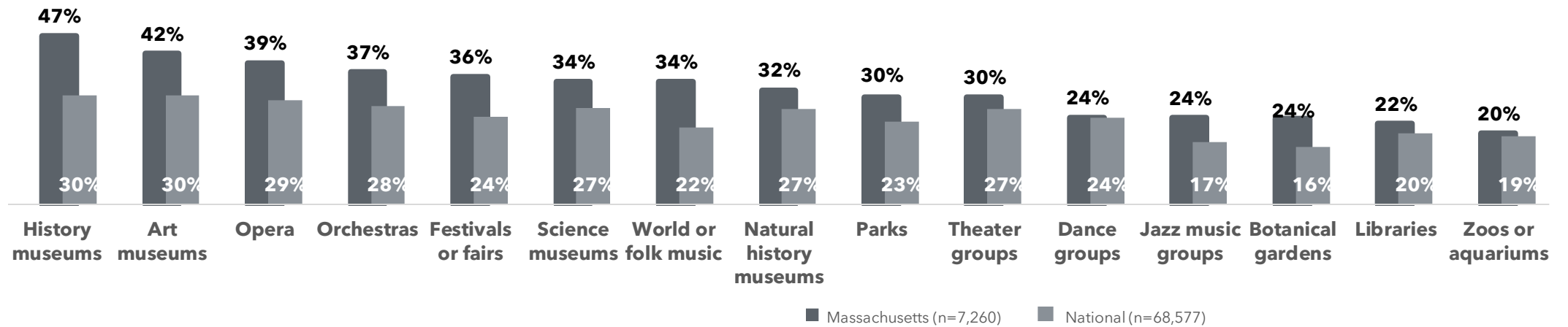


## MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIVES OF ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS

Q22. What qualities or values are most important to you in an arts or culture organization? Please select up to FIVE.

^ indicates significant difference from one group at 95% level

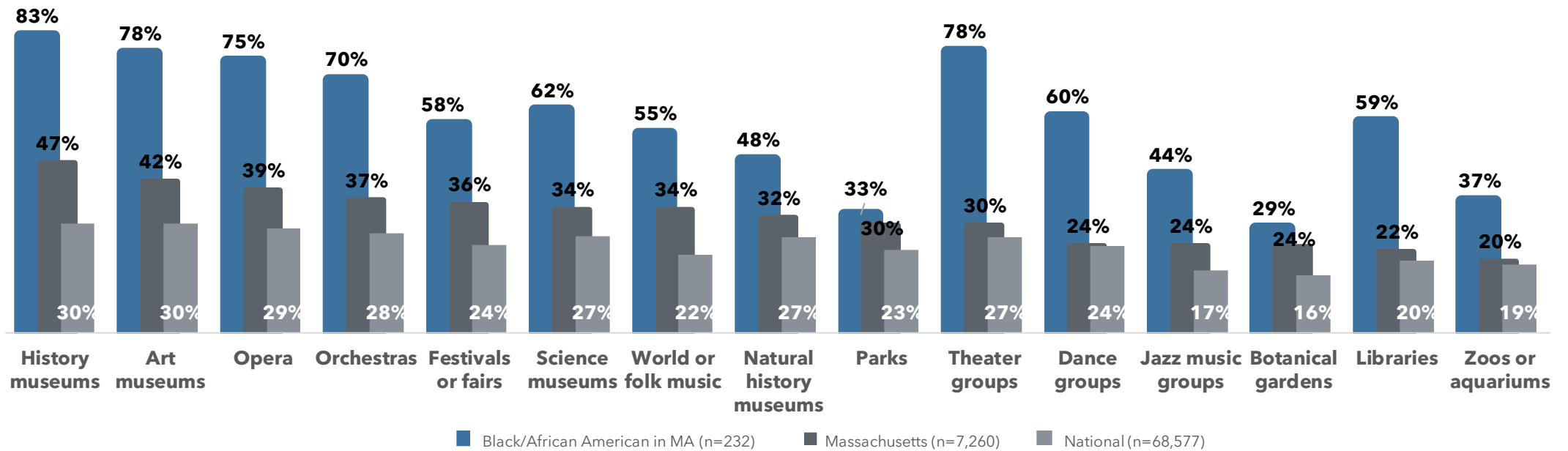
Massachusetts residents are more likely than Americans overall to believe that systemic racism is present in arts and culture organizations, and this finding holds true across virtually every genre.



### PERCEPTIONS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS

Q26. Based on what you've seen or heard, do you think systemic racism is present in each of the types of organizations below (Top 2 Box: Those that selected "Strongly agree")

**Black and African Americans in MA were significantly more likely than the rest of the state to believe that systemic racism was present in every genre of arts or culture.**

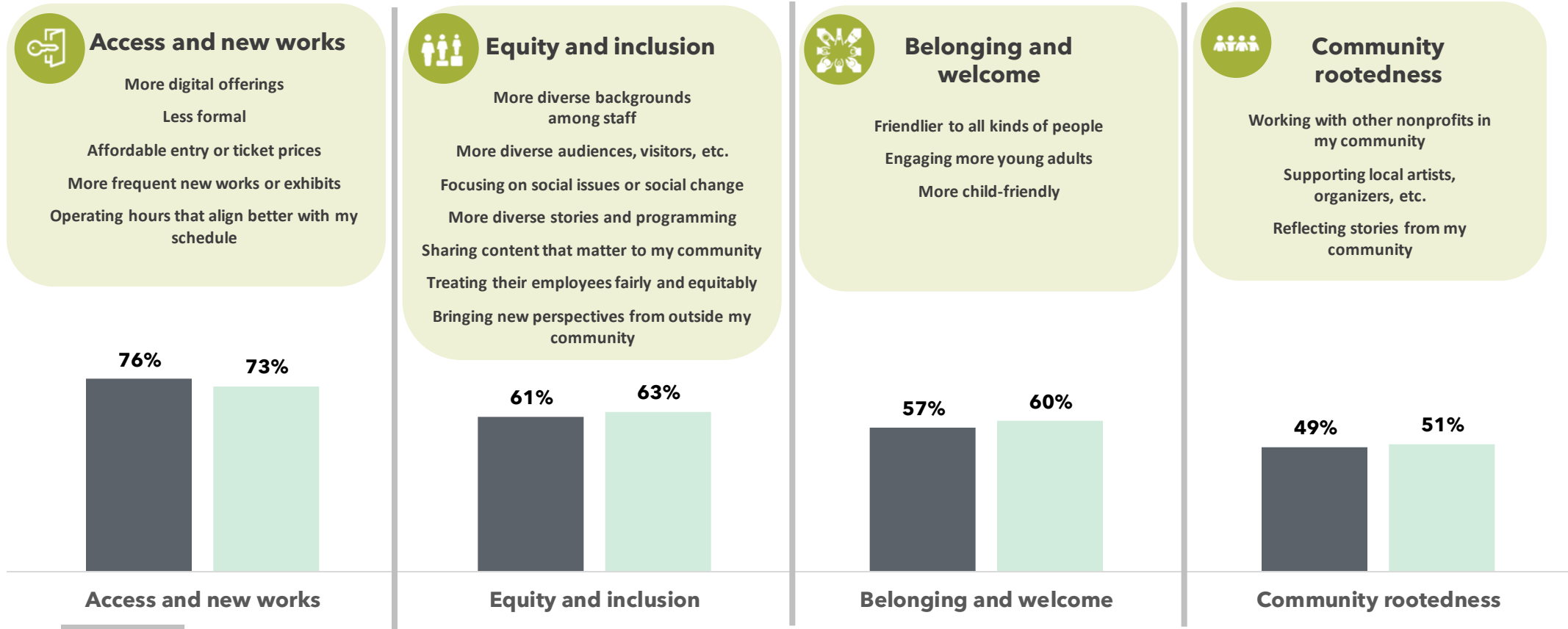


**PERCEPTIONS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS**

Q26. Based on what you've seen or heard, do you think systemic racism is present in each of the types of organizations below (Top 2 Box: Those that selected "Strongly agree")



# Most Western MA residents (87%) want to see changes in arts or culture organizations. Four main types of change are desired:



## TYPES OF CHANGE DESIRED FOR ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS

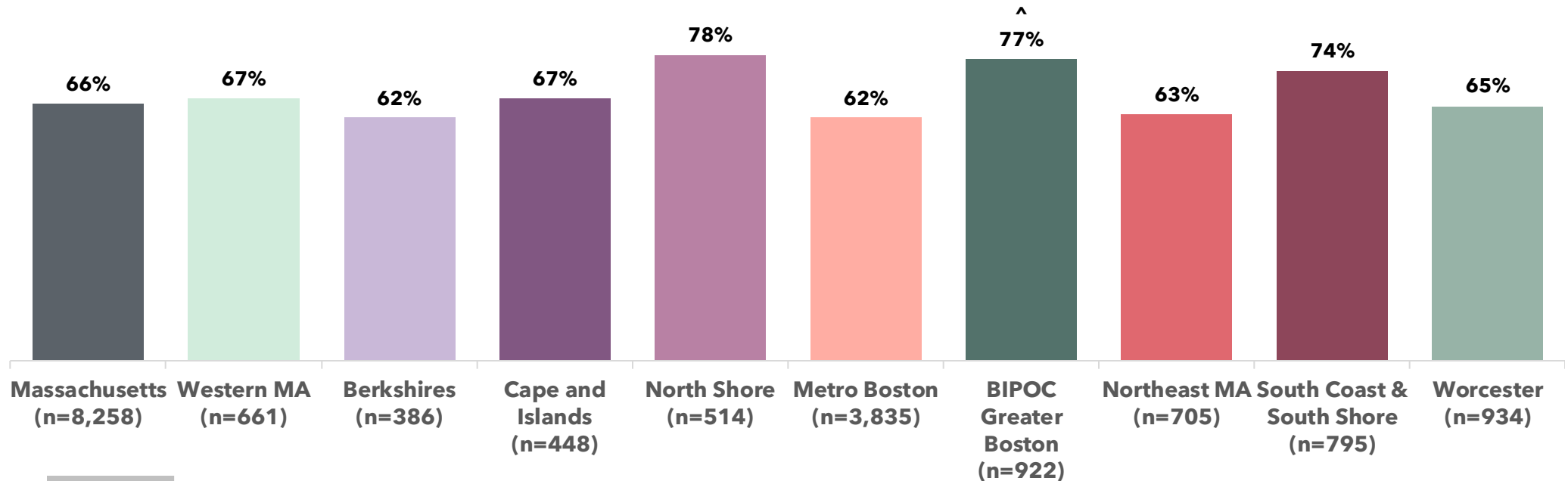
■ Massachusetts (n=8,358) ■ Western MA (n=665)

Q25. In general, would any of these types of changes make arts or culture organizations better for you in the future? Please select ALL that apply.

<sup>^</sup> indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level

## Just over two-thirds of Western MA residents want arts or culture organizations to collaborate with their communities to create programs—similar to the state as a whole.

- And co-creation was particularly important to those that live in the North Shore and South Coast/South Shore regions of the state, along with BIPOC Greater Bostonians compared to MA overall.



### IMPORTANCE OF CO-CREATION AND COLLABORATION

Q24. Arts or culture organizations should involve their communities and collaborate with them to create programs. - How much do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements? (Top 2 Box: Those who selected "Strongly agree")

<sup>^</sup> indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level

## DETAILED FINDINGS

# THE POWER OF ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

## During the Pandemic, Western MA residents participated in arts & culture online at a higher rate than in the state overall.

- Although Western MA residents have paid for online arts & culture content (26%) at similar levels to the state as a whole (27%).

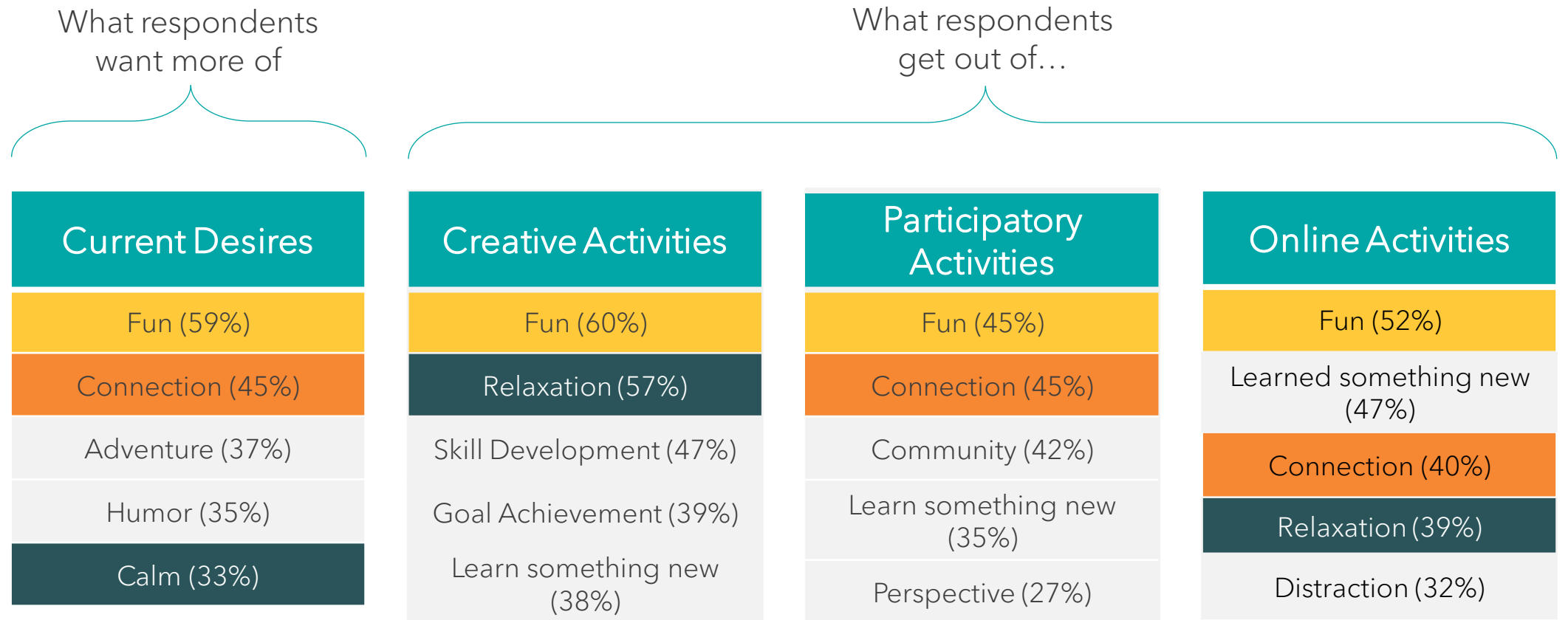


### ENGAGEMENT WITH ONLINE ARTS & CULTURE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Q5. Have you done any online arts or culture activities or events over the past year? This might have been via your computer, a streaming service, mobile phone or tablet. Please select ALL that apply.

Q10. Over the past year, have you paid for any online arts or culture activities? Please select ONE.

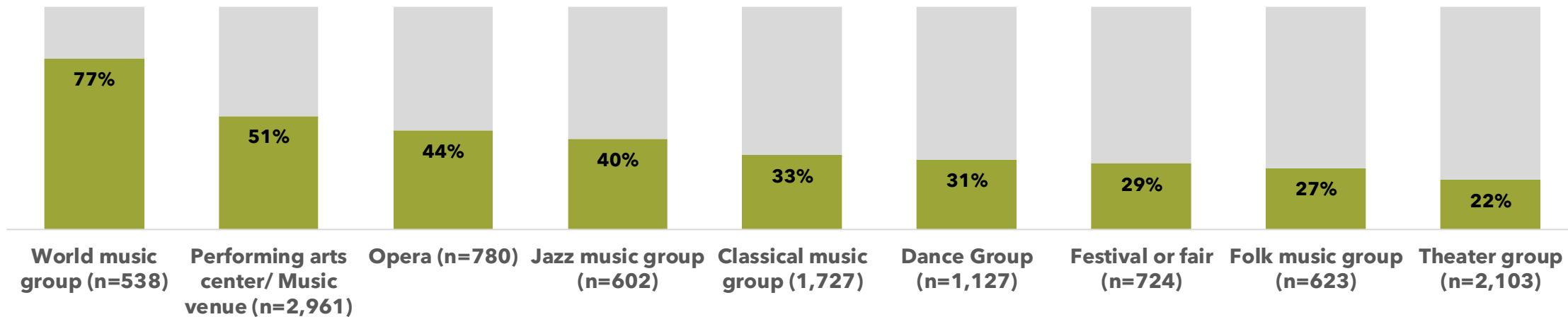
**Online arts and culture activities primarily provided participants with a way to have fun, connect with others, and relax—elements that were very aligned with what people said they wanted more of in their lives.**



## Online offerings engaged many MA residents who had not attended similar programs from performing arts organizations in person in the past several years.

- And in many artistic formats or cultural categories, that “digital only” subset of users was much more demographically diverse than recent in-person attenders, with significantly higher proportions of Hispanics/Latinx Americans across many genres and Black or African Americans for a few genres.

### % Online **Performing Arts** attendees who **HAVE NOT BEEN IN RECENT YEARS (DIGITAL ONLY)**



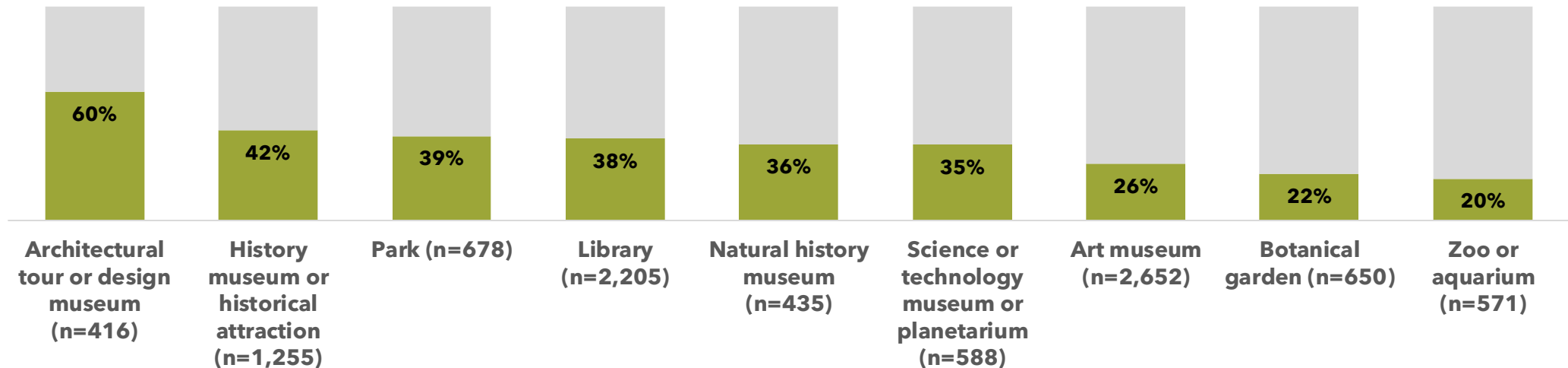
#### MAKEUP OF DIGITAL ARTS & CULTURE AUDIENCES

Q7. Who provided the online arts or culture activities that you did? Please select ALL that apply.

Q8. You shared that you participated in an online activity offered by a museum over the past year. Which kind(s) of museum were those? Please select ALL that apply

**Online offerings engaged many MA residents who had not attended similar programs from museums and other cultural organizations in person in the past several years.**

**% Online Museums and Outdoor attendees who **HAVE NOT BEEN IN RECENT YEARS (DIGITAL ONLY)****

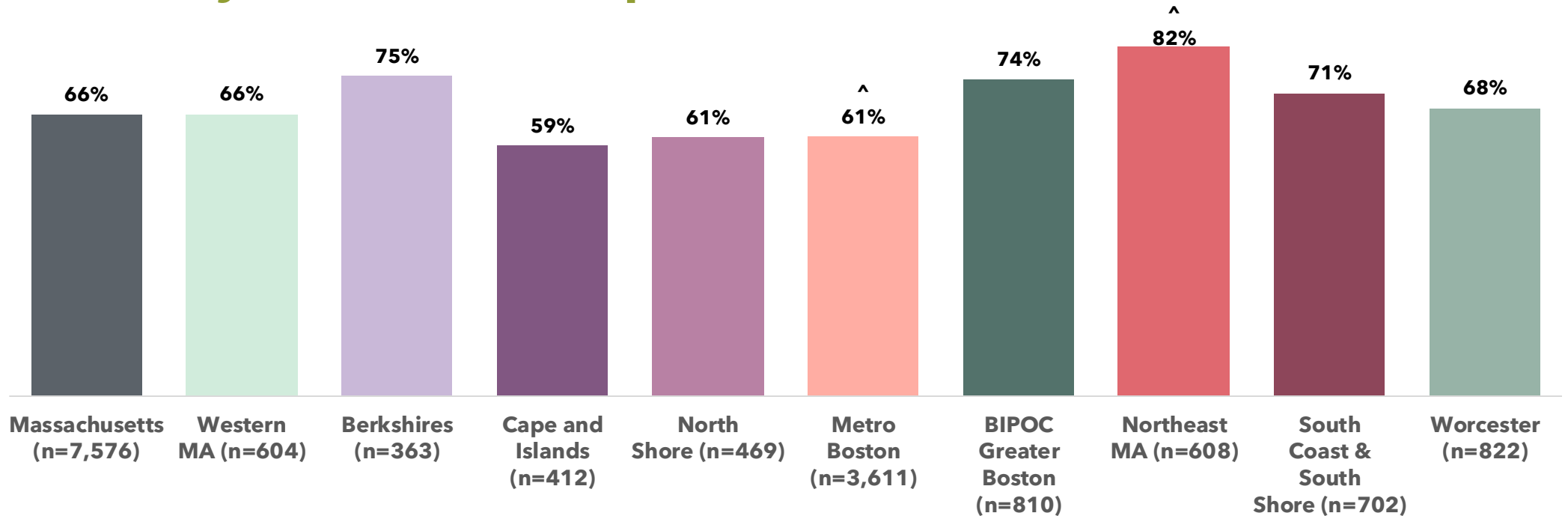


**MAKEUP OF DIGITAL ARTS & CULTURE AUDIENCES**

Q7. Who provided the online arts or culture activities that you did? Please select ALL that apply.

Q8. You shared that you participated in an online activity offered by a museum over the past year. Which kind(s) of museum were those? Please select ALL that apply

**Two-thirds of Western MA residents said it was important that online arts & culture activities let them experience organizations and artists from other locations that they normally wouldn't see in person.**



**...allow me to experience organizations or artists located in other places, that I normally wouldn't see in person.**

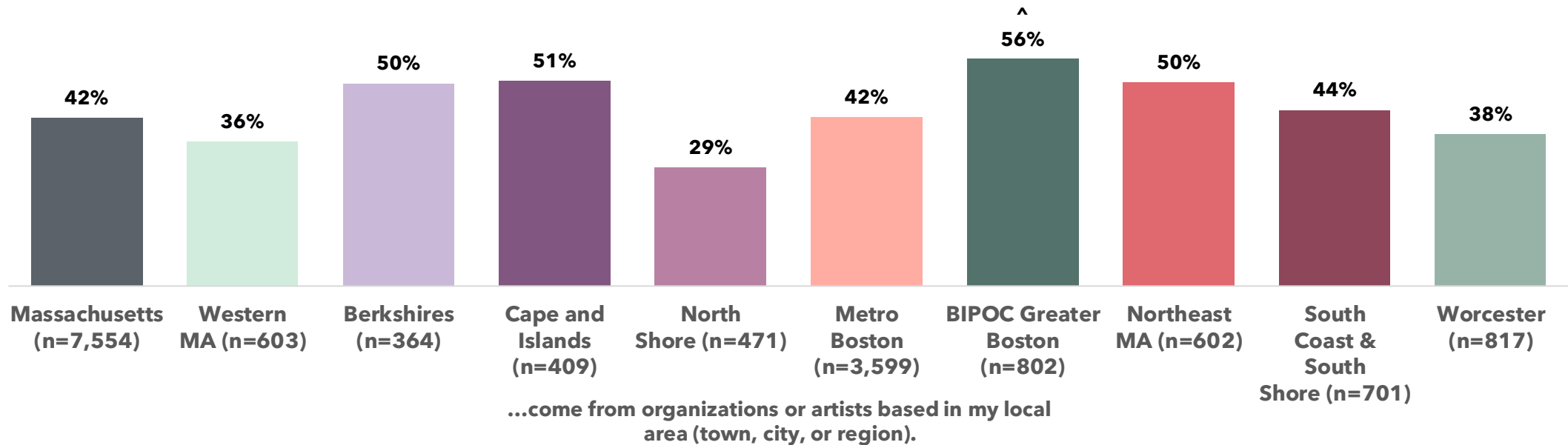
### IMPORTANCE ACCESSING NON-LOCAL ARTS & CULTURE ONLINE

Q9\_2. ...allow me to experience organizations or artists located in other places, that I normally wouldn't see in person. - Thinking about the kinds of online arts or culture activities that you've done, how important are the following qualities... (Top 2 Box: Those who selected "Strongly agree")

*^ indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level*



**But just over a third of Western MA residents said it was important that online arts and culture content came from local organizations—slightly lower than the state overall.**

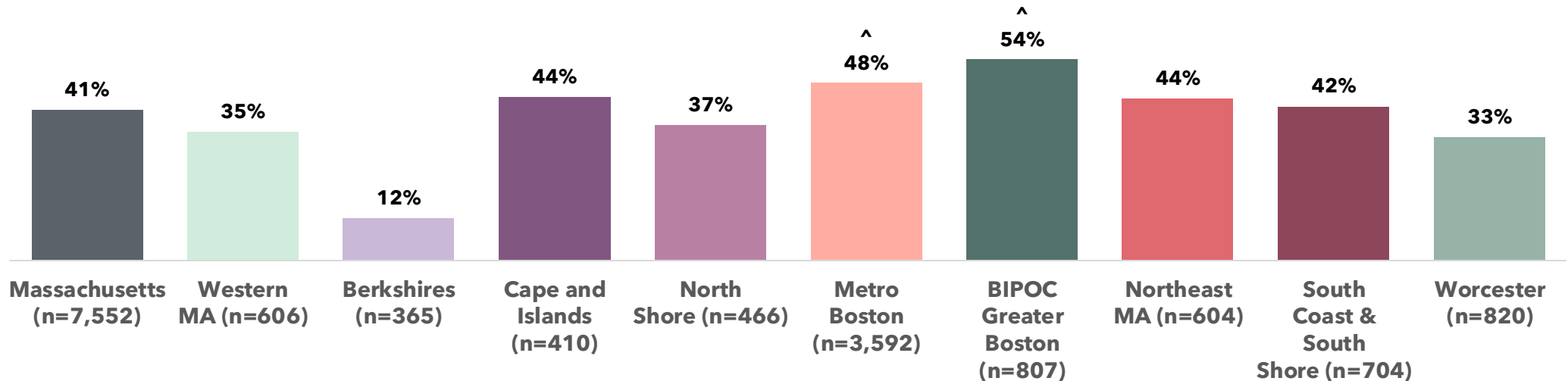


### IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL AND PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH ONLINE ARTS AND CULTURE

Q9. ...come from organizations or artists based in my local area (town, city, or region). - Thinking about the kinds of online arts or culture activities that you've done, how important are the following qualities? It is important to me that online arts and culture activities... (Top 2 Box: Those selecting 'Very Important')

<sup>^</sup> indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level

Also, just over a third from Western MA noted that it was important to them that online arts & culture activities came from organizations they've attended previously—again slightly lower than the state as a whole.



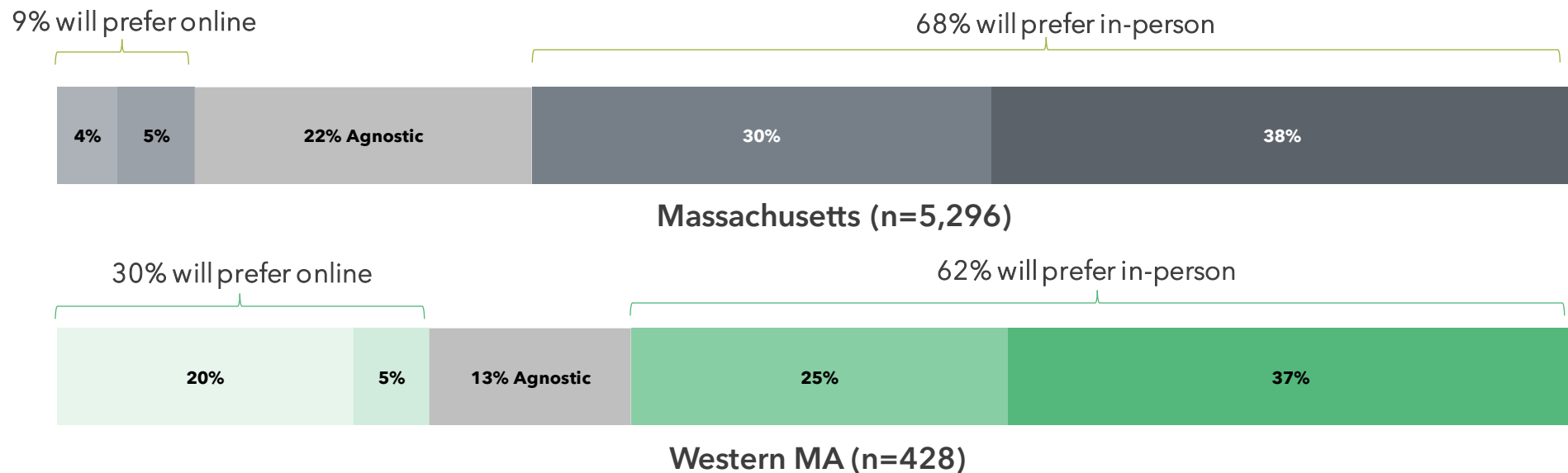
...come from organizations or venues I've attended myself or have a personal connection with.

### IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL AND PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH ONLINE ARTS AND CULTURE

Q9. ...come from organizations or venues I've attended myself or have a personal connection with. - Thinking about the kinds of online arts or culture activities that you've done, how important are the following qualities? It is important to me that online arts and culture activities... (Top 2 Box: Those selecting 'Very Important')

<sup>^</sup> indicates significant difference from all MA respondents at 95% level

However, there is a desire for in-person arts & culture activities once they are more available; many Massachusetts residents expect they'll prefer them over online options. Interestingly, Western MA residents are more likely to prefer online content.



#### THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL VS IN-PERSON PREFERENCES

Q44. When you are able to engage in (or engage in more) in-person arts or culture activities, how do you expect you'll split your time between online and in-person experiences? Please select ONE option.

"Agnostic" refers to those selecting either "I'll prefer online and in-person activities equally" or "I'll make my decisions solely on the basis of the content"

## **ACTIONABLE OPPORTUNITY AREAS**

We've included a set of reflection questions as a tool to start discussions around these activation areas in your organization.

**We've assembled a broad set of action areas informed by community voices for your consideration on the following pages.**

**However, we believe that the “what and how” of putting these ideas into practice will necessarily be unique to each organization because all are at different points of practice for these principles, hold their own histories and missions, and are situated within distinct communities.**

**We hope that this gives some readers a more rigorous empirical foundation for their work or a stronger case for support, and *all* readers inspiration and evidence to explore new possibilities for service, equity, and sustainability.**

# 1. Making arts and culture experiences more welcoming

1. How welcome or unwelcome do your audiences feel across your organization's full range of experiences?
2. How do you support and encourage welcome in your space, experiences, and communications? Are the attributes of welcome infused throughout the experiences you offer, or present only at the point of entry?
3. How recently have you talked to your participants, attenders, visitors, etc. about how it feels to enter and move through your space? What about non-attenders and not-yet-users? What did they have to say about feelings of welcome...or its opposite?
4. Do you have clear and easy mechanisms for people to share feedback about their experiences? Is that feedback taken seriously and acted on empathetically and creatively?
5. Who in your organization is charged with responding to and acting on this feedback (which departments, divisions, people)?

## 2. Addressing social issues

1. What issues or challenges matter most to your community—or rather, to specific communities in your area? Do any of these issues align with your own mission, focus, or values?
2. What connections do (or could) exist between your art-form or cultural category and those kinds of social issues? Who are the artists or content-experts that are actively exploring those connections?
3. What kinds of dialogue are already taking place about those issues, and what organizations are already working on them locally, nationally, or globally?
4. Are there concerns within your organization about the idea of addressing social issues or contributing to community change? What kinds of dialogue would be necessary, and which stakeholders need to be at the table?
5. How could your organization address a priority social issue at different levels: internally through staff/board/process, through programming and content, through partnerships?

### 3. Dismantling systemic racism

1. What do you hope will result from the work of dismantling systemic racism: addressing injustices, furthering your mission, serving new audiences, something else?
2. Have people (visitors, audiences, staff, community members, etc.) experienced racism in your organization? Do you have processes in place to fully investigate and address any experiences of racism that may occur among staff, audiences, visitors, or community members?
3. How has your organization benefited from systemic racism? How have you and your colleagues acknowledged the history and practices of systemic racism in your organization in the past?
4. How does anti-racism influence your hiring practices and board recruitment? Your content and curation? Your marketing strategies? Your community or national partnerships?



## 4. Fostering community collaborations

1. Does your organization have a clear definition of its community? In what ways could it benefit from collaborating with that community on programming and beyond?
2. What does collaboration look like, who are the key stakeholders, whose voices are most important, and what channels can your organization use to hear those voices?
3. Does your organization treat collaborating organizations or individuals as equal partners? Are you or your funders compensating those partners for their time and insights—and doing so consistently and equitably? Are these partnerships ongoing or are they one-offs (which can feel extractive)?
4. Are you honoring and reinforcing equity in your collaborations through shared decision-making, respect, and reflection of ground-level community priorities?
5. Where do (or will) the benefits of your partnerships accrue? To your organization? To the partnering organization(s)? To people in the community?

## 5. Consider the potential benefits and costs of extending digital engagement

1. What aspects of online offerings seem necessary to get through the pandemic and what aspects are considerations in your long-term engagement strategies?
2. To what extent is diversification of audiences a priority for your organization? Do you have evidence that *your organization's* online offerings have reached a more diverse audience than your in-person events?
3. Is digital a revenue stream for your organization? Does your organization have access to grants, donations, or other resources that can help subsidize the provision of digital offerings?
4. Does your organization think of digital as a "pipeline" to in-person attendance? If so, why? Would digital engagement still be valued by your organization if it doesn't lead to any more in person attendance?

We'd like to thank the Barr Foundation for their generous support of this research & our *truly* expert advisory group for their time, insights, and wisdom.

### The Barr Foundation Arts Program Team

- San San Wong, Alexandra Juckno, SueEllen Kroll, & Giles Li

### Consulting Advisor to the Project:

- Katrina Bledsoe, PhD | Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Expert

### Advisory Group Members

- Barbara Schaffer Bacon | Americans for the Arts
- Bora Chiemruom | Lowell Telemedia Center (LTC)
- Kara Elliott-Ortega | Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, City of Boston
- David Howse | Arts Emerson
- Margaret Keller | Community Access to the Arts (CATA)
- Emily Ruddock | MASSCreative
- Margo Saulnier | New Bedford Creative
- Anh Vu Sawyer | Southeast Asian Coalition of Massachusetts
- Siddhartha Shah | Peabody Essex Museum
- Rosario Ubiera-Minaya | Amplify Latinx

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*pronouns: she/her*

Jen has served as Principal Investigator on the national, mixed-methods research initiative Culture + Community: A Special Edition of Culture Track, in collaboration with LaPlaca Cohen, Yancey Consulting, and other partners and funders. Over the past seven years at Slover Linett, Jen has overseen scores of research and evaluation studies for culture and community organizations of all kinds and sizes. Jen volunteers as an advisor to IMLS on its National Museum Survey Initiative and a Learning & Leadership Council Member for Opera America. She holds a PhD in public administration and survey research methodology from the University of Illinois, Chicago. [» full bio](#)



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*pronouns: he/his*

An experienced research manager and methodologist, Matthew has played key roles in the pandemic-era national research and strategy collaboration, Culture + Community in a Time of Transformation, focusing especially on analysis of digital engagement during the pandemic. He has recently worked with orchestral clients exploring what comes next for their online offerings after the pandemic. He holds an MBA in marketing with a certificate in business data analytics from Loyola University Chicago's Quinlan School of Business and has a Bachelor of Music in Music Management from the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music. [» full bio](#)

**About Slover Linett**  
[hello@sloverlinett.com](mailto:hello@sloverlinett.com) | [@sloverlinett](https://twitter.com/sloverlinett) on Twitter

Founded in Chicago in 1999, Slover Linett is a social research and evaluation practice for the cultural and community sector, broadly defined to include the performing and participatory arts, museums of all types, libraries, parks and public spaces, public media, science engagement, placemaking, and philanthropy. The firm's mission is to help practitioners and policymakers increase equity and access, deepen engagement, and meet human and community needs. For more information, visit [sloverlinett.com/CCTI](https://sloverlinett.com/CCTI). For questions about this study or the broader Culture + Community research collaboration, please email [CCTT@sloverlinett.com](mailto:CCTT@sloverlinett.com).

# APPENDIX

# Culture & Community Research Sequence

2020

Wave 1 national audience & community survey\*



Key Findings from Wave 1  
July 2020



“Centering the Picture”  
Special analysis by race & ethnicity  
December 2020

2021

Qualitative interviews with Black adults across the U.S.



Qualitative Study Key Findings  
February 2022



“A Place to be Heard...”  
In-depth interviews about creativity, self-care, welcome, and belonging  
November 2021

Wave 2 national audience & community survey



Key Findings from Wave 2  
November 2021



“Rethinking Relevance...”  
Cumulative, detailed insights & implications  
January 2022



October 2021  
Authored by:  
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Focus on Massachusetts  
in partnership with the Barr Foundation  
January 2022

Focus on Massachusetts  
Regional Reports  
A series of 9 companion reports  
highlighting regional findings in MA  
January 2022



\*Note that MA organizations participated in Wave 1, but there was no report specific to Massachusetts

# Survey Methodology for National Comparisons

## Panel Survey

- We also partnered with NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel to collect responses from a sample representative of all U.S. residents.
- We collected 3,617 responses with an oversample of 750 people including Black or African Americans, people of Hispanic or Latinx origin, and people with low incomes.
- We weighted this data to be representative of the U.S. population.



## Organizational List Survey

- 532 participating arts and culture organizations distributed the survey to a portion of their email lists; in total the survey went to 2.1 million people with 74,742 completed responses.
  - Organization focus areas included: Museums (36%), Music (15%), Theater and Comedy (11%), Arts and Culture in Communities (11%), Parks, Zoos, and Botanic gardens (5%), and Libraries (4%)



## Combined Sample (Panel + List) Weighted to Represent U.S. Residents Overall

We weighted all responses across the lists and the panel (n=78,359) to be representative of the general U.S. population

**THANK YOU!**

**For more information, please  
visit our website at  
[www.sloverlinett.com/cctt](http://www.sloverlinett.com/cctt)**