

NW Arkansas Dance Ecosystem Development



Photos L to R:
Megha Rao photo by Corey Lamb; Ballet
Folklorico photo by Corey Lamb; NWA Ballet
Theater photo by Max Grubb

NW Arkansas Dance Ecosystem Development

**Presentation by Karen Castleman and
Heather Hartley**

October 5, 2021

This project is funded by the Walton Family Foundation and
fiscally sponsored by Rogers Experimental House

WALTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION



Rogers Experimental House

About the NW Arkansas Dance Ecosystem Development project (NWADED)

Project Purpose: Develop models for the creation of a new program/organization whose mission is to promote whole-person and community health through dance & movement.

Project Action Items: Four key components to year long research spearheaded by Castleman.

1. Local dance and wellness stakeholder focus groups
 2. Interviews with National Leaders from around the country in the dance field to inform best practices and suggest models
 3. **Survey:** create and disseminate a survey among local dance/movement makers, residents, and healthcare providers.
 4. Pilot demonstration project that tests suggestions from the other research components
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NWADED Survey: About the Process

20

Survey Partners Circulated a Link to the Survey to their email lists

15

Number of Days the Survey was available:
August 17-August 30, 2021

571

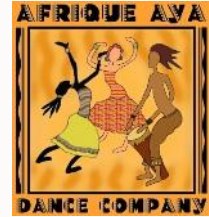
Total Responses

Survey Goal: The survey specifically captured audience-level data on awareness and interest in dance and movement performance and practice as well as interest in connections between dance and healthcare.

NWADED Survey: Survey Partners



NWA
BALLET
THEATRE



Rogers Experimental House



Additional thanks to the Schmieding Center, Whole Health Medical School, Direct Care Clinic, Encompass Health, Sole 2 Soul and Dhirana Academy of Classical Dance

This region is located on the homelands and territories of Indigenous peoples, including the Osage, Caddo, and Quapaw Nations. We acknowledge their stewardship of and relationship to the land with gratitude and commitment to ongoing conversation.

Survey Summary: Observations



Photo of Robyn Jordan by OZCAST

Survey Observations:

What We Are Learning

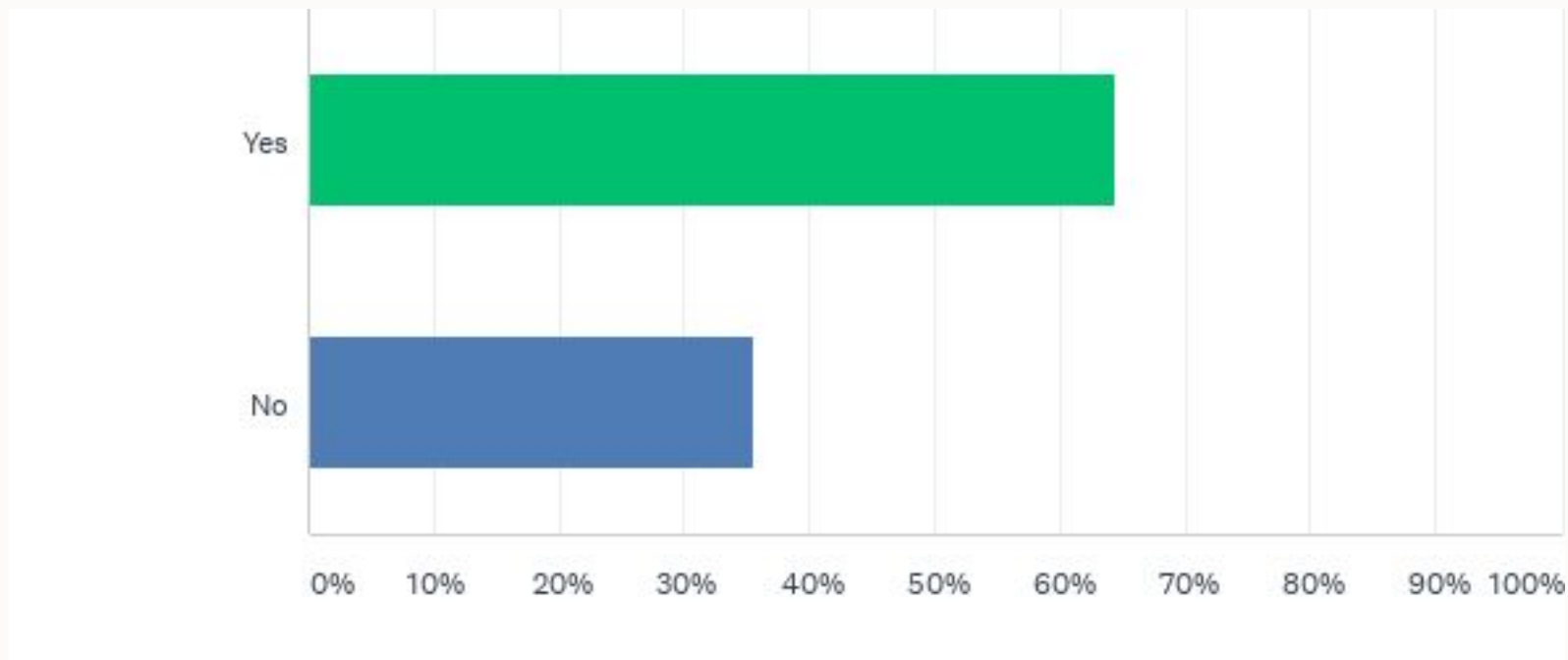
- There is **high level of interest** in dance performance attendance AND dance participation.
 - Top barriers to involvement are **lack of knowledge** about events and price sensitivity.
 - Strong interest in **supporting local** organizations, but low awareness of current groups & cultural offerings. This = high growth potential!
 - Dance patrons are **traveling to other cities/regions** outside of NWA to consume dance activities.
 - **Collaborative Opportunities:** Festivals, venue & presenter initiatives, and other community building activities/organizations are needed.
 - Potential partnerships for growth exist with **the health and wellness** industries.
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Survey Observation:

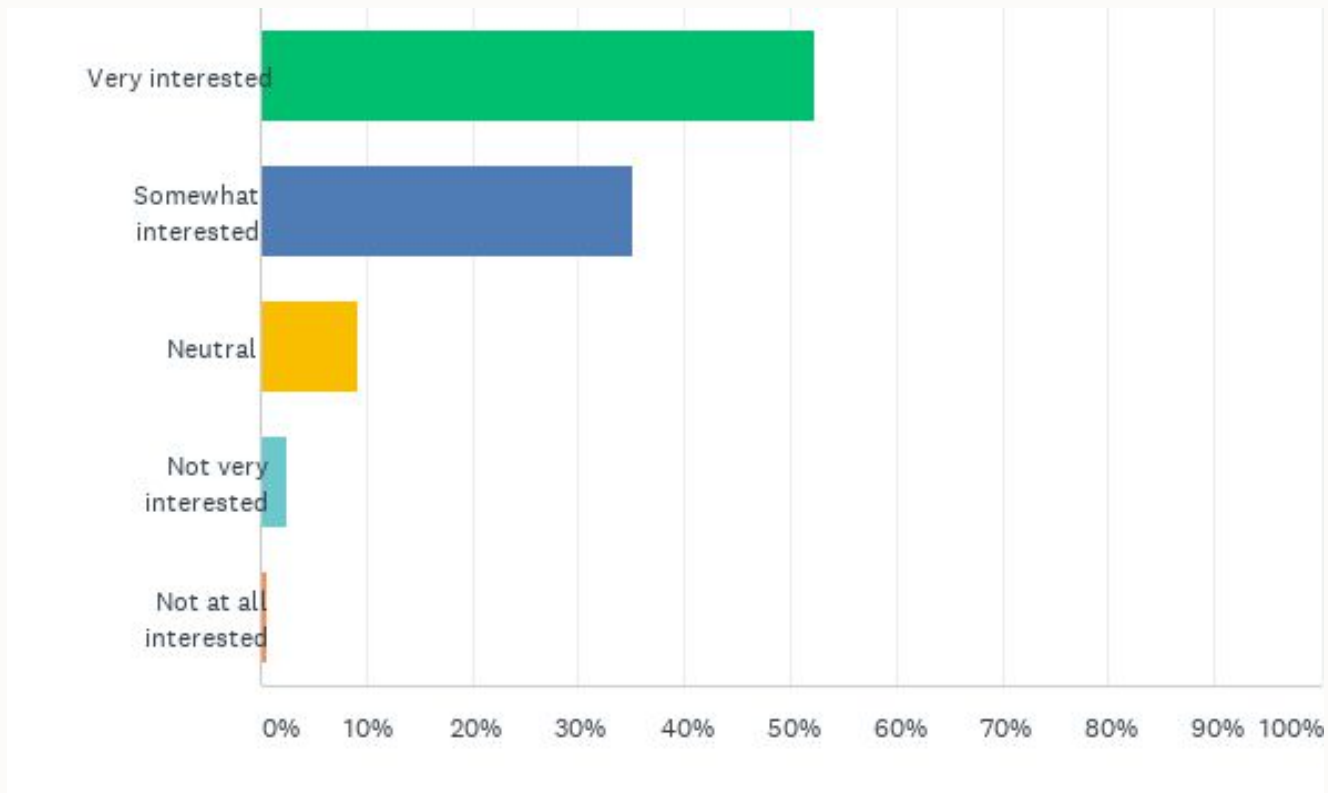
There is a high level of interest in dance performance attendance and dance participation

- Almost 100% of the 571 respondents had been to a professional dance performance.
 - 55% are not professionally involved in the dance industry (i.e. they are audience members, parents of dancers, or work in health/wellness fields.)
 - The majority of respondents have been to 1 or more dance performances in the past 3 years. 175 had been to 4-8 or more!
 - Nearly 70% of respondents plan to see a dance performance in the next 6 months.
 - Over 80% of respondents would be interested in seeing forms of dance they haven't seen before.
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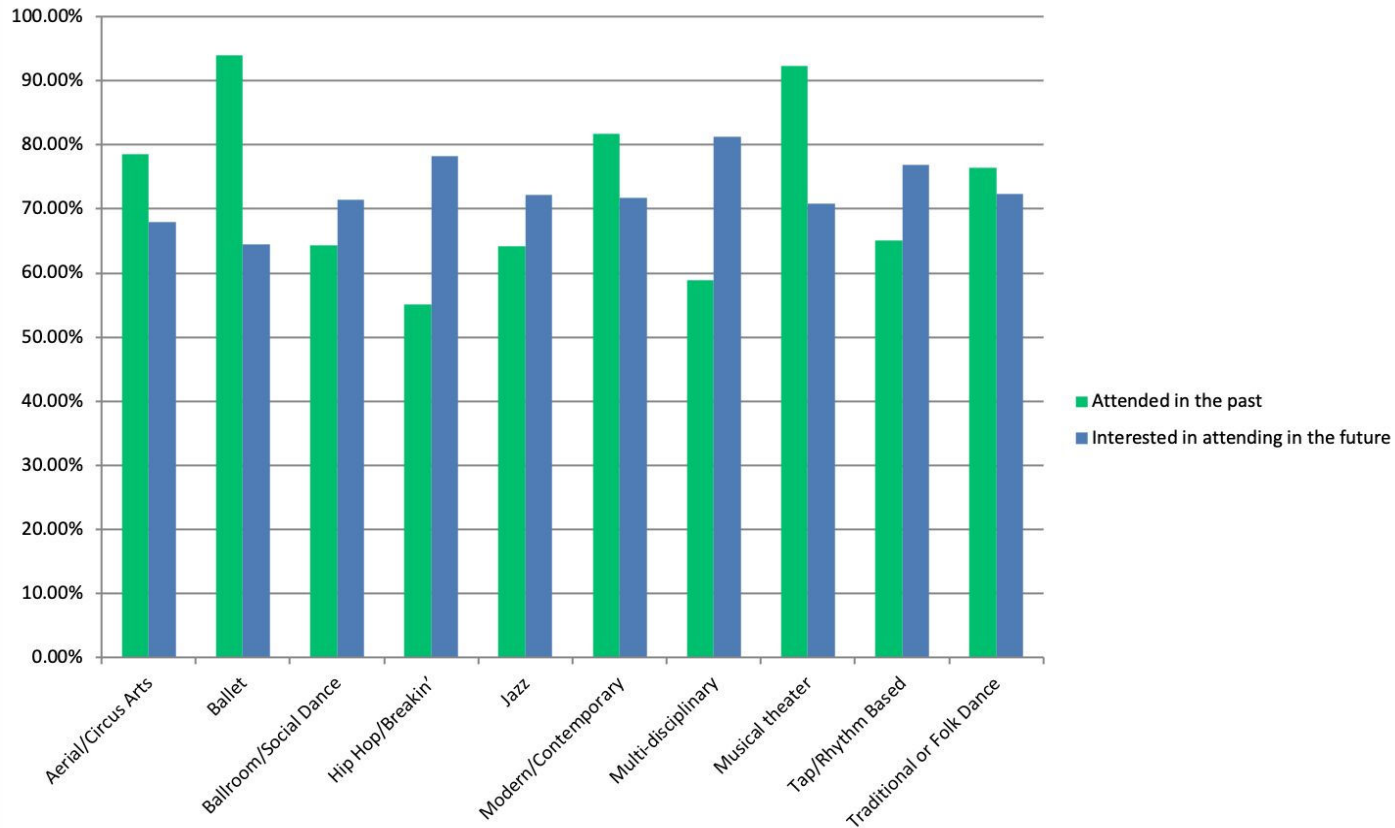
I plan to see a dance performance in the next six months.



How interested are you in seeing other styles of dance that you haven't seen before?



Please indicate whether you have attended or are interested in attending the following types of dance performances:



In support of More Dance Presentation

Quote from a Survey Respondent:

“I am drawn to multi-disciplinary performance in general. Also, new and interesting collaborations from fresh and brave voices in dance. I'm also interested in Dance that is informed by social consciousness.”

Survey Observation:

Regarding dance participation...

An overwhelming majority of respondents have taken a dance class in the past.

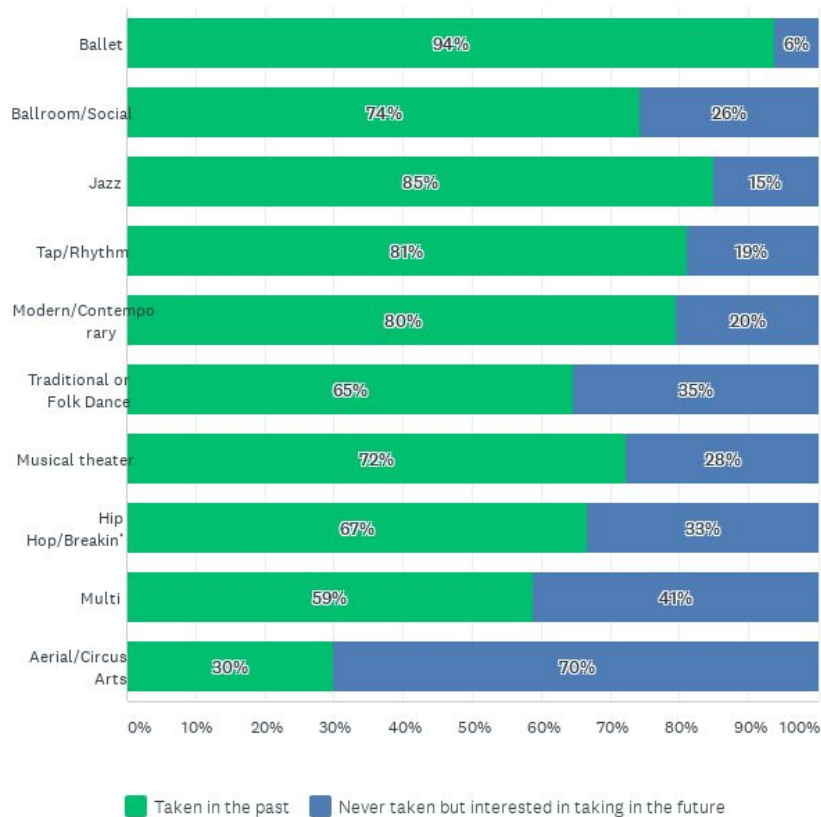
Over half answered that they are interested in taking a dance class in the future.

The responses for future dance styles to learn was broad and varied, with strong interest in Aerial dance, Hip Hop and Traditional/Folk.

Top responses for motivations to attend a dance class in the future include:

- Someone to attend class with
 - Free or discounted class ticket
 - Word of mouth/Friend recommendation
-

Please indicate what styles of dance you have taken or are interested in taking from the following types of dance classes:



What would motivate you to take a dance class in the future? Select ALL that apply.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Word of mouth/Friend recommendation	43.01%	206
Free class	40.29%	193
Someone to attend classes with	40.08%	192
Discounted classes	34.86%	167
Sampling a new style at a dance performance	29.02%	139
More knowledge about the instructor	22.76%	109
Online classes via Zoom	22.13%	106
Other (please specify)	17.75%	85
Total Respondents: 479		

Data Implications:

High interest in performances and classes needs greater communication and cultivation

- There is tremendous interest in a larger amount of dance performances, and more dance experiences overall.
- Classes offer a great opportunity for community building and awareness. The interest is there. Now it needs cultivation.

Classes are a great way to build vibrant communities, and generate revenue



Photo courtesy of NWA Swing Society

Survey Observation:

Top barriers to more involvement are lack of knowledge about events and price sensitivity.

- Over 90% of respondents stated that **more information** about upcoming performances and performing groups, as well as greater variety in dance performances are the top motivating factors to decide to see a dance performance.
 - Similarly, **not knowing about upcoming performances was the #1 reason for not attending.**
 - Audiences in NW Arkansas are accustomed to free events creating a climate of **price sensitivity**
-

What are the top THREE factors that would motivate you to see an upcoming dance performance? SELECT THREE

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More information on performances	54.35%	250
More information about works to be performed	42.83%	197
Greater variety of dance performances	41.30%	190
Lower ticket prices	31.30%	144
Sneak previews before a show opens	19.13%	88
Special ticket promotions	18.70%	86
More background information on companies	16.96%	78
Someone to attend performances with	16.52%	76
Post-show talks by the dancers or choreographers	15.65%	72
Convenient parking	15.22%	70
Other (please specify)	8.26%	38
Reviews by dance critics	5.43%	25
Total Respondents: 460		

In support of Increased Communication

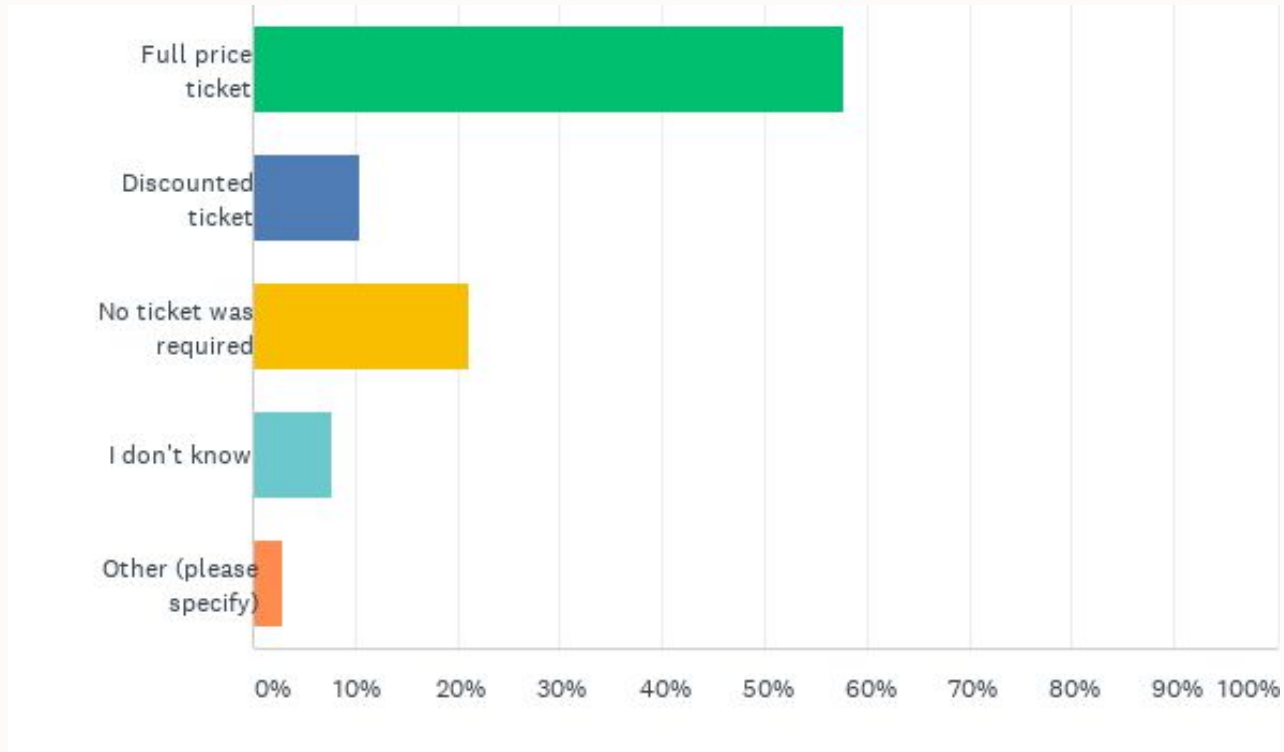
Quote from a Survey Respondent:

“It is often hard to find out when and where these events are happening. I have often found out a few days after they occur. I would love it if there was one place that was an information clearinghouse for dance opportunities in the region even if the performances were from different groups—then I could subscribe for updates from one place.”

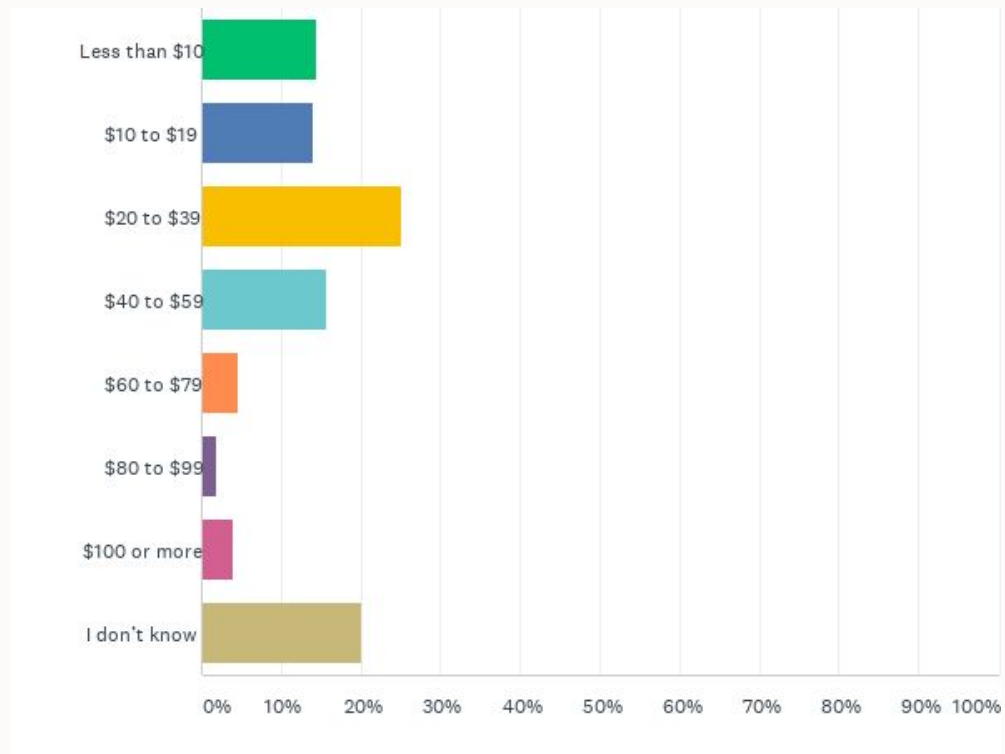
What would motivate you to attend a dance performance? Select ALL that apply.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Free tickets	47.64%	91
Discounted tickets	44.50%	85
Sneak previews before a show opens	32.46%	62
Someone to attend performances with	30.37%	58
Sampling a new style as a short opening act at a performance I usually attend	30.37%	58
Sampling a new style through online video	28.27%	54
Food provided or a dinner special before the show	28.27%	54
Reviews by dance critics	16.23%	31
Other (please specify)	16.23%	31
Post-show talks by the dancers or choreographers	15.18%	29
Total Respondents: 191		

Please think about the most recent dance or movement performance you attended. What type of ticket did you have for the performance?

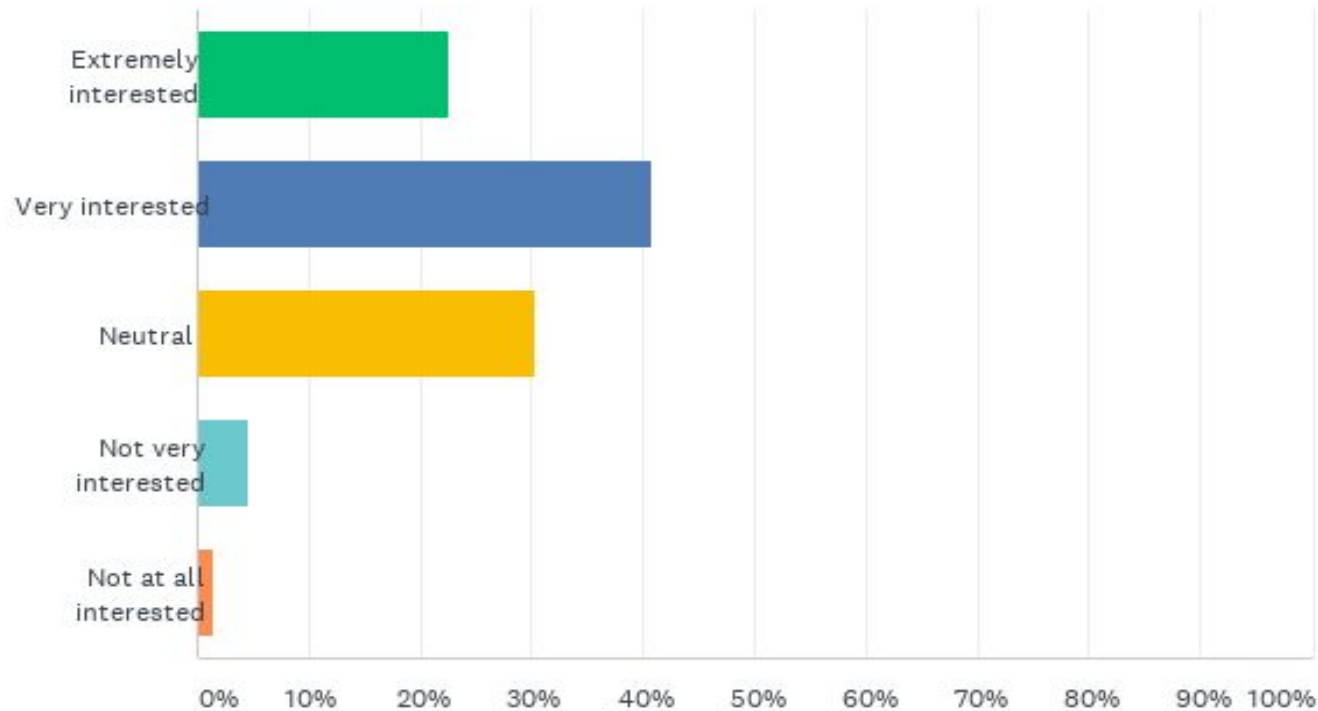


What was the approximate price of your ticket?



How interested are you in attending a dance performance in the future?

Response by those who had not recently seen a dance performance



Data Implications:

Increase Awareness, Alleviate Environmental Factors

- Consider community communication strategies!
- Increased use of the CACHE calendar (or expansion)
- Expansion of dance event promotion through partnerships with News/media outlets
- Partnerships/grants that make low cost, high quality dance events more broadly available and publicized.
- Reduction in environmental barriers: creative/discounted pricing strategies, easy parking, friend networks, sneak previews, and more access to dance at venues where the interested patrons are already familiar with the landscape.

How can we better coordinate communication and access as a community?



Photo of Afrique Aya Dance Company by Richard Quick

Survey Observation:

Strong interest in supporting local organizations, but low awareness of current local groups/cultural offerings

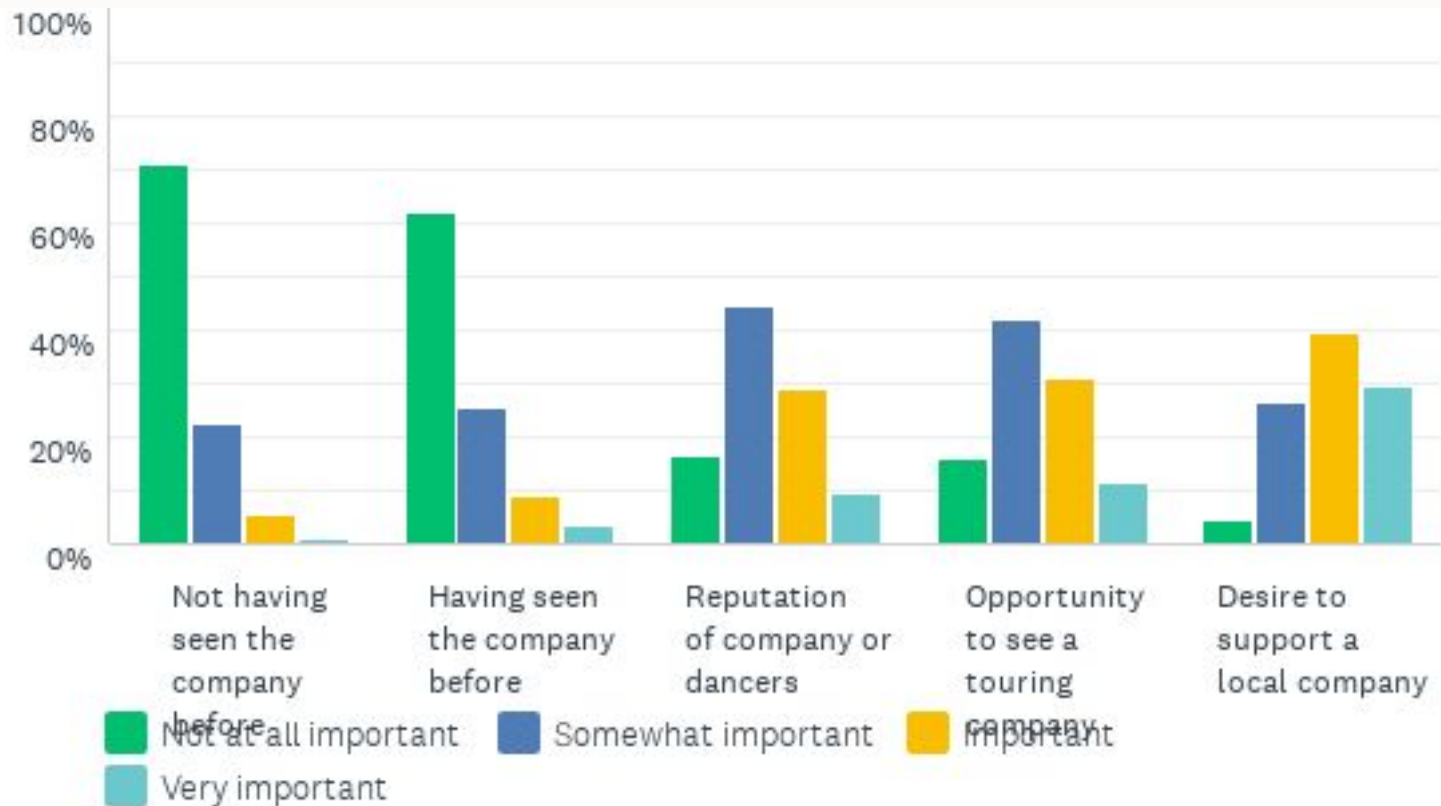
- **315 respondents answered it is Important or Very Important to support a local company.**
- **190 answered the opportunity to see a touring company was Important or Very Important**

Whether they had seen the company/dance artists before or not was not important. The reputation of the dancers/company was somewhat important for most.

Of the 9 local dance organizations mentioned in the survey, the vast majority of respondents, an **average of 70% or more**, were most familiar with the ballet companies, NWA Ballet Theatre and Ballet Arkansas.

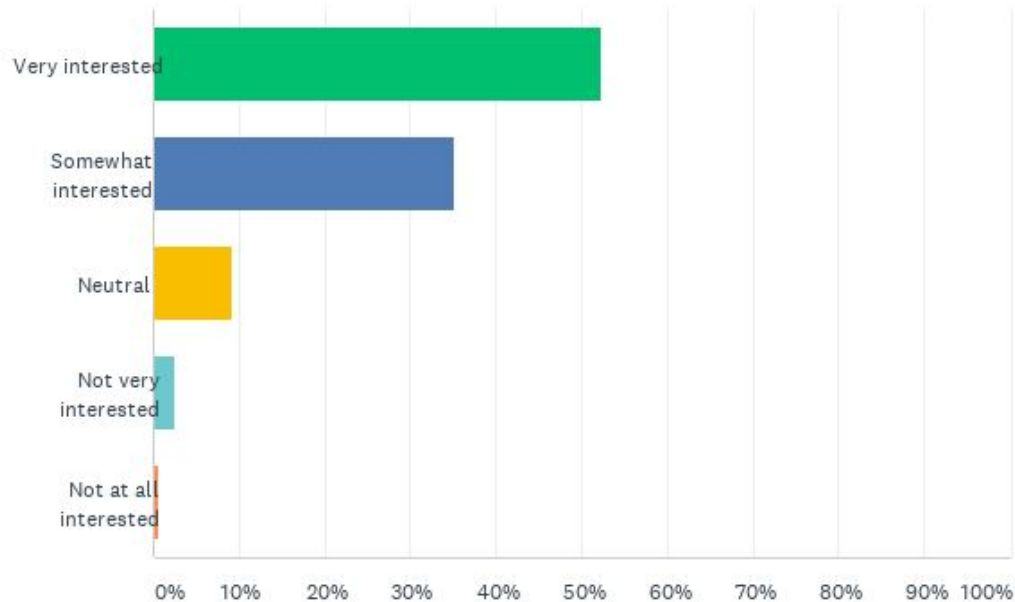
Respondents were much less familiar with other locally based groups, an **average of 20% or less**, particularly cultural groups such as Ballet Folklórico Herencia de Mexico, Bharatanatyam, Island Pacific Dancers, and Afrique Aya.

As you decide whether or not to attend a particular dance performance, how important is each of the following artistic/production factors?



How interested are you in seeing other styles of dance that you haven't seen before?

Q7 How interested are you in seeing other styles of dance that you haven't seen before?



Have you heard of the following Arkansas based dance companies?

	YES	NO	TOTAL
NWA Ballet Theatre	71.37% 324	28.63% 130	454
Ballet Arkansas/Little Rock	51.33% 232	48.67% 220	452
Ballet Folklórico Herencia de Mexico	26.97% 120	73.03% 325	445
Afrique Aya	15.83% 69	84.17% 367	436
Bharatanatyam (Classical Indian Dance)	22.20% 99	77.80% 347	446
Western Arkansas Ballet	17.05% 75	82.95% 365	440
Noble 8 Lion (Fort Smith)	1.61% 7	98.39% 427	434
Island Pacific Dancers of NW Arkansas	16.55% 73	83.45% 368	441
Breaking Habits Crew	3.76% 16	96.24% 410	426

In support of Arkansas based dance companies

Quote from a Survey Respondent:

“Supporting a local company, especially if it offers opportunities for local dancers in a wholesome, healthy atmosphere that promotes mental and physical health to the community is important.”

Survey Implications:

Increase awareness of local offerings, especially culturally specific groups

- Again, how can we better coordinate communication and access as a community?
- Are there ways venues/presenters can create access opportunities for artists in NWA?
- Partnership models with out of town touring groups that are designed to ELEVATE local awareness.

Strong interest in supporting local organizations, but low awareness of current groups & cultural offerings = high growth potential!



Photo of Maura Garcia by OZCAST

Survey Observation:

Dance Patrons are traveling to other cities/regions outside of NWA to consume dance activities

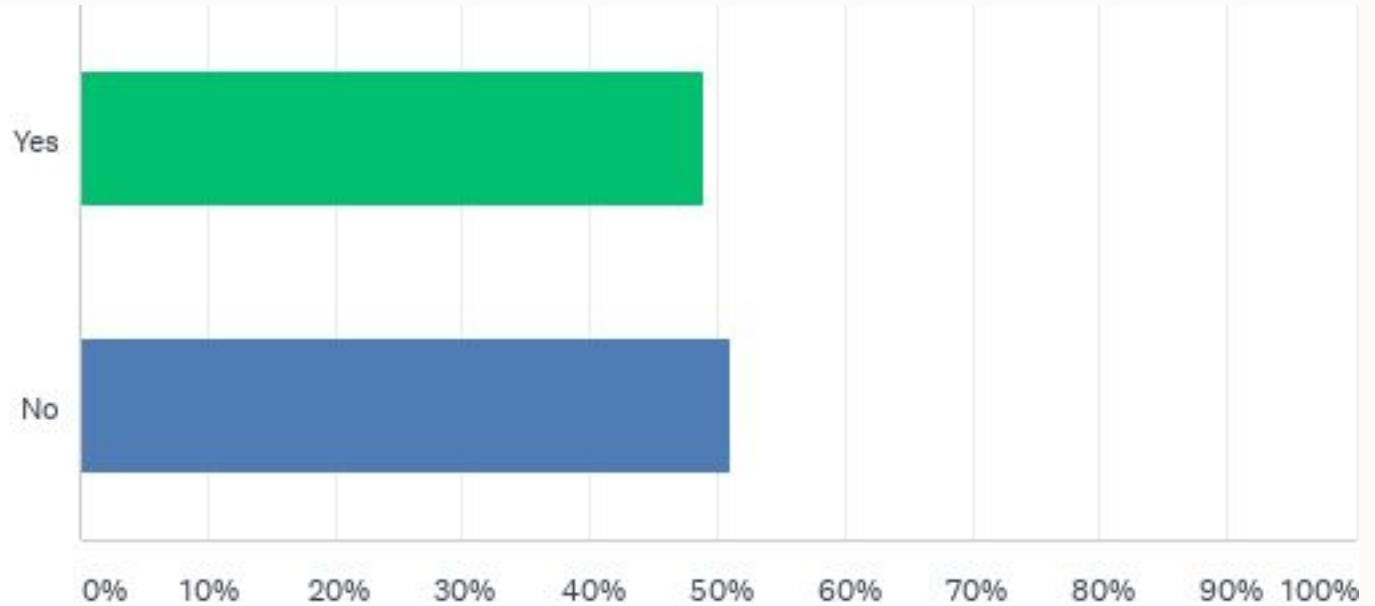
Awareness and engagement with regional organizations is high.

- 73% of participants have attended a performance at the Walton Arts Center. 51% have attended a dance performance at Crystal Bridges.
- 27-37% have attended a dance performance at either TheatreSquared, the Momentary, the Art Center of the Ozarks, or the Arend Arts Center.

However:

- Almost **50% of respondents** indicated they travel outside the area to see dance, some as close as Tulsa, Kansas City, Dallas and OKC, others as far away as NYC, Chicago, San Francisco and Minneapolis.
-

Q: I travel to see dance performances in other regions/cities.



Word Cloud: Where Respondents Travel to See Dance



Survey Implications:

Cultural Tourism dollars are going to other markets

- Increased presentation of local or touring productions could vitalize local economy
 - Opportunity to continue to increase the reputation that NWA is an Arts and Culture destination
 - Continue dialogue with other regional presenters about shared bookings and partner on investment in tourist strategies
 - Local artists can be ambassadors for the region when they travel to other markets
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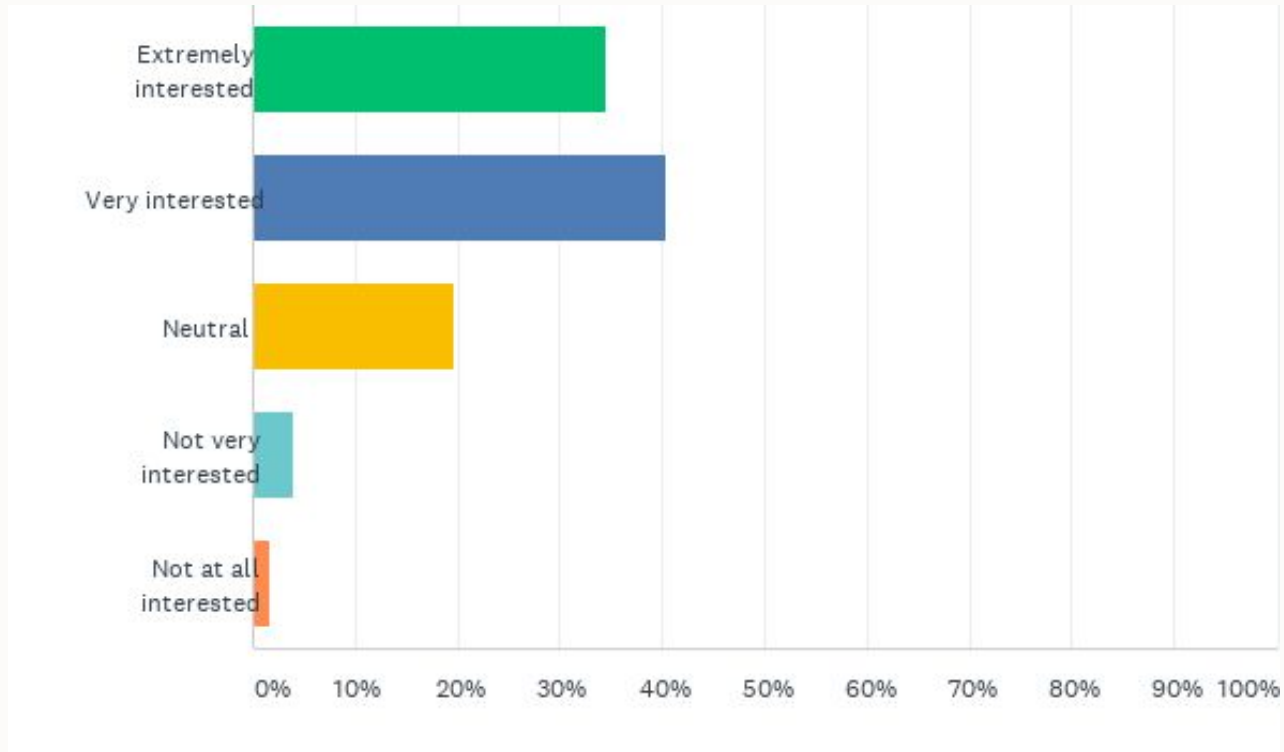
Photo of NWA Ballet Theater by Max Grubb

Survey Observation:

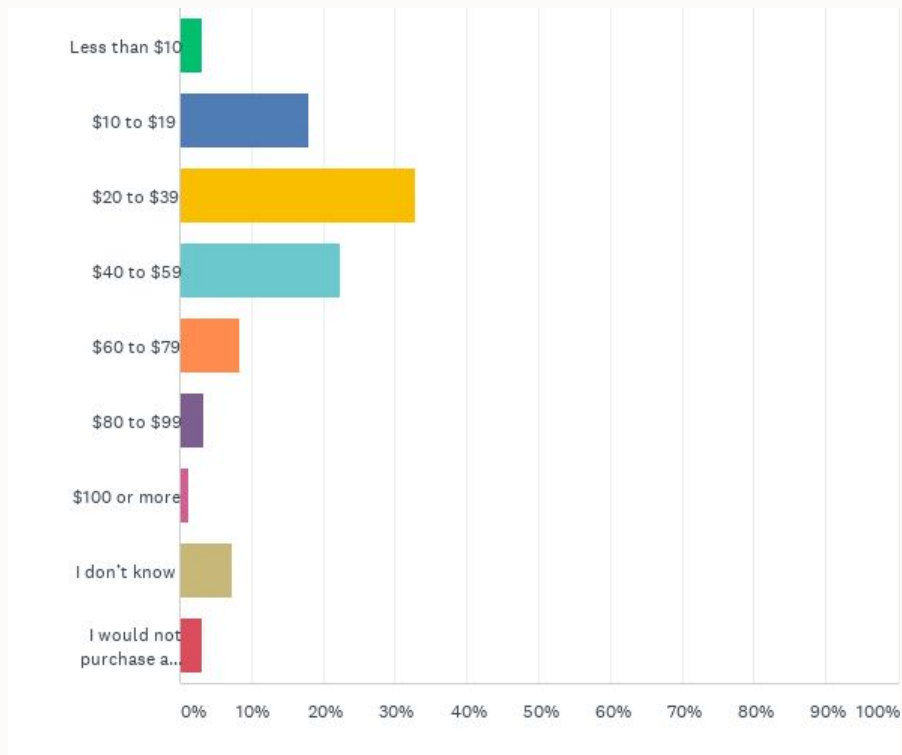
Collaborative Opportunities: Festivals, venue & presenter initiatives, and other community building activities/organizations are needed.

- There is a high level of interest in attending a multicultural dance festival featuring local dance companies.
 - The need to present such a festival with an eye for keeping the price accessible, is an opportunity for lots of collaboration and creativity!
 - A very important factor influencing participants' decision to take a dance or movement class was the ability to get to class within 20 min. from home or work. This indicates decentralization and spread of activity.
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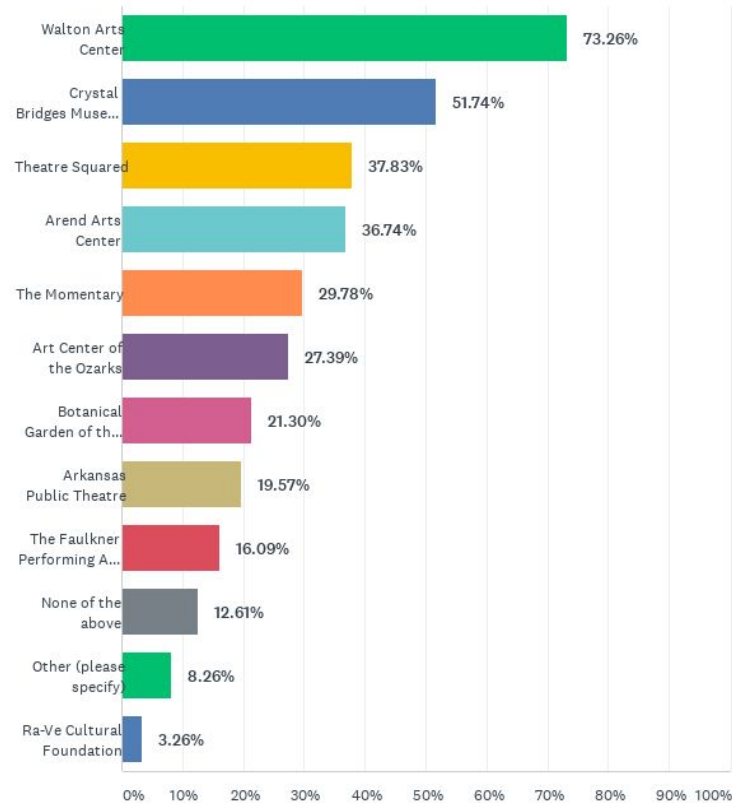
Would you be interested attending a dance Festival that included several (3-5) of the NWA local companies in the future?



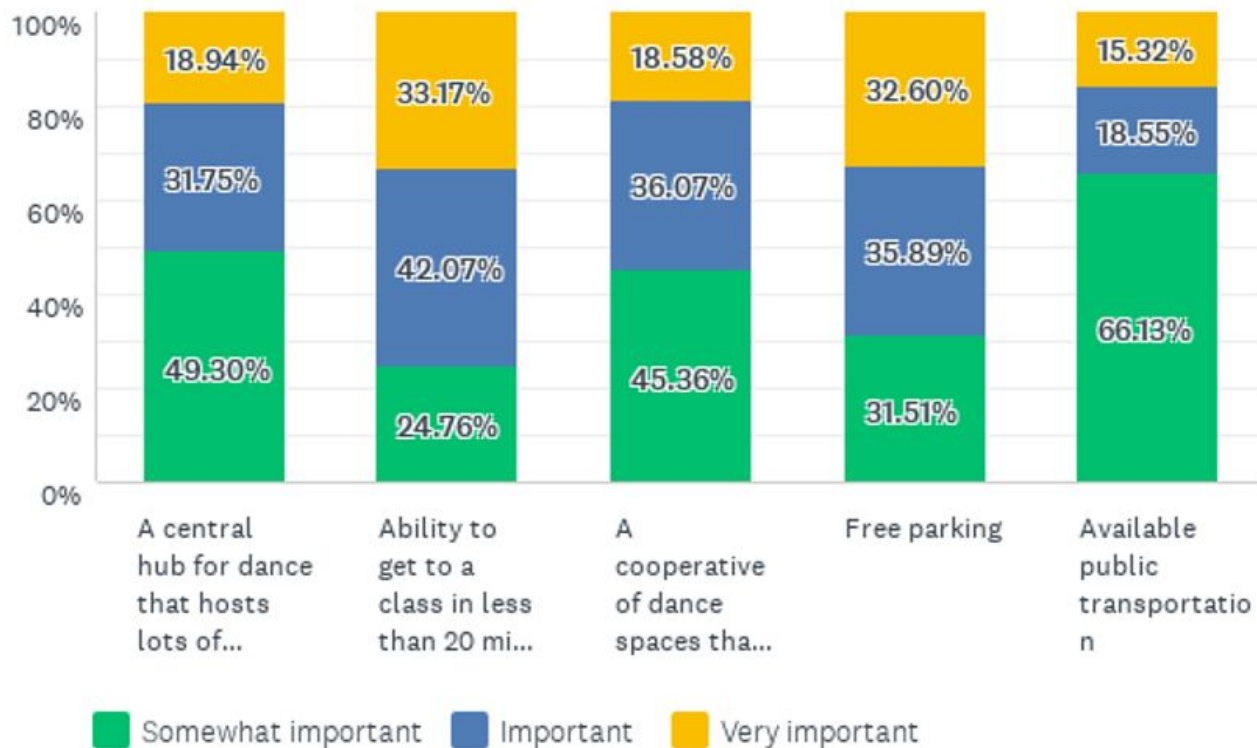
What would you be willing to pay for a dance Festival ticket featuring 3-5 local companies?



Have you attended a dance performance at the following venues in the past? Check ALL that apply.



To what degree would the following factors positively influence your decision to take a dance or movement class?



Survey Implications:

New Initiatives to Build Bridges Across Communities and Neighborhoods Could Lead to Vibrant Engagement

- There is tremendous interest in something like a Multi-Cultural dance festival here in NWA!
 - Price barriers and distance will require encouraging enticements to reach success. Dance engagement in NWA will need to be subsidized in order to build audiences and familiarity.
 - I invite community leaders to think about how we can work collaboratively around programming and local artist development needs.
 - How might the community become engaged in developing a culture that feels abundant rather than scarce?
-



Photo of Kalaloka Institute of Fine Arts, courtesy of RaVe Cultural Foundation

Survey Observation:

Potential areas for growth and partnerships exist with the health and wellness industries

- 33 healthcare providers participated in the survey
 - There is strong awareness of the numerous ways dance partners with healthcare to address significant medical issues (Parkinsons, Alzheimer's, etc.)
 - Over 75% feel that movement practices/activities are somewhat to very important when speaking with patients about their general health/well being.
 - Over 30% of participating healthcare providers would be interested in offering a movement practice to their patients in the near future.
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Survey Observation:

Potential areas for growth and partnerships exist with the health and wellness industries

Healthcare Participation in Movement based exercise:

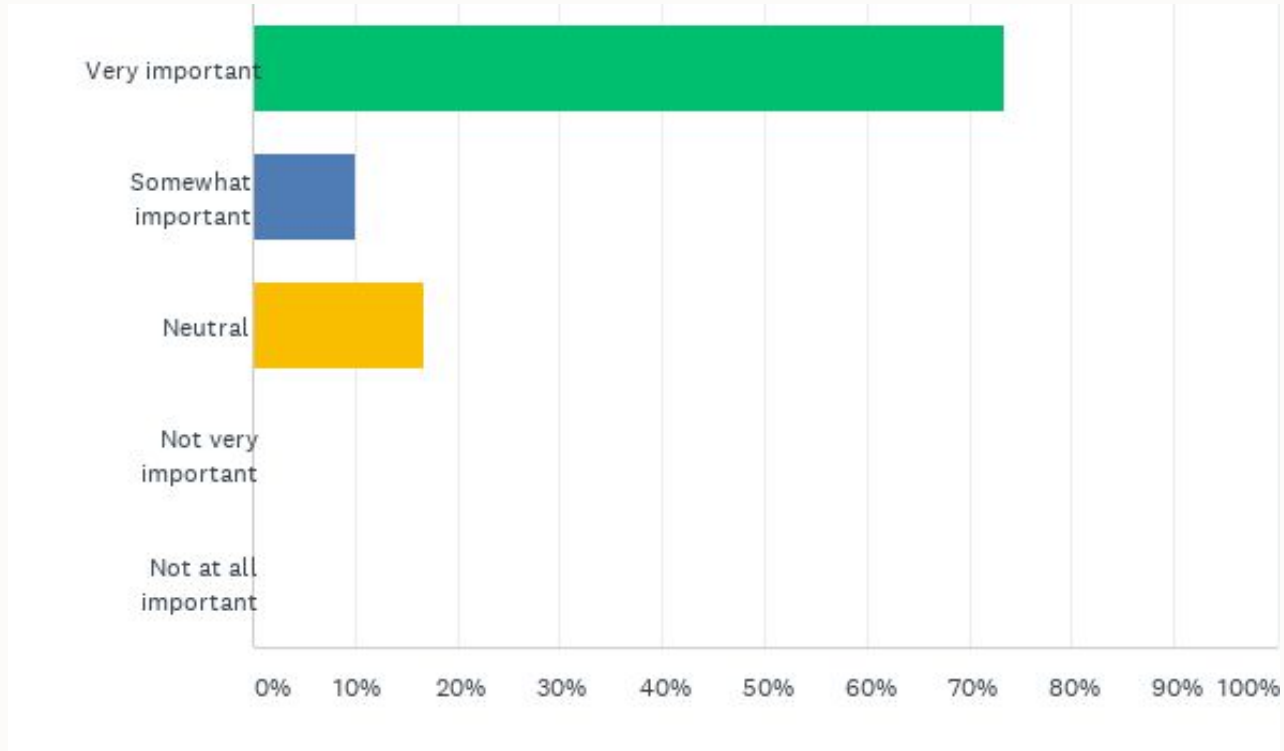
- The majority of participating healthcare providers engaged in Yoga, Cycling or Hiking as an independent movement activity. Half also participated in Pilates, Running or Swimming. Weightlifting, climbing, walking and Zumba were mentioned in private comments.
 - 62% of participating healthcare providers would be interested in participating in a movement practice geared towards healthcare practitioners as either a one time workshop or an ongoing class.
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Dance and movement are being used to treat a variety of medical conditions in facilities and programs. Please indicate below if you are familiar with dance being used to treat the following: Select ALL that apply.

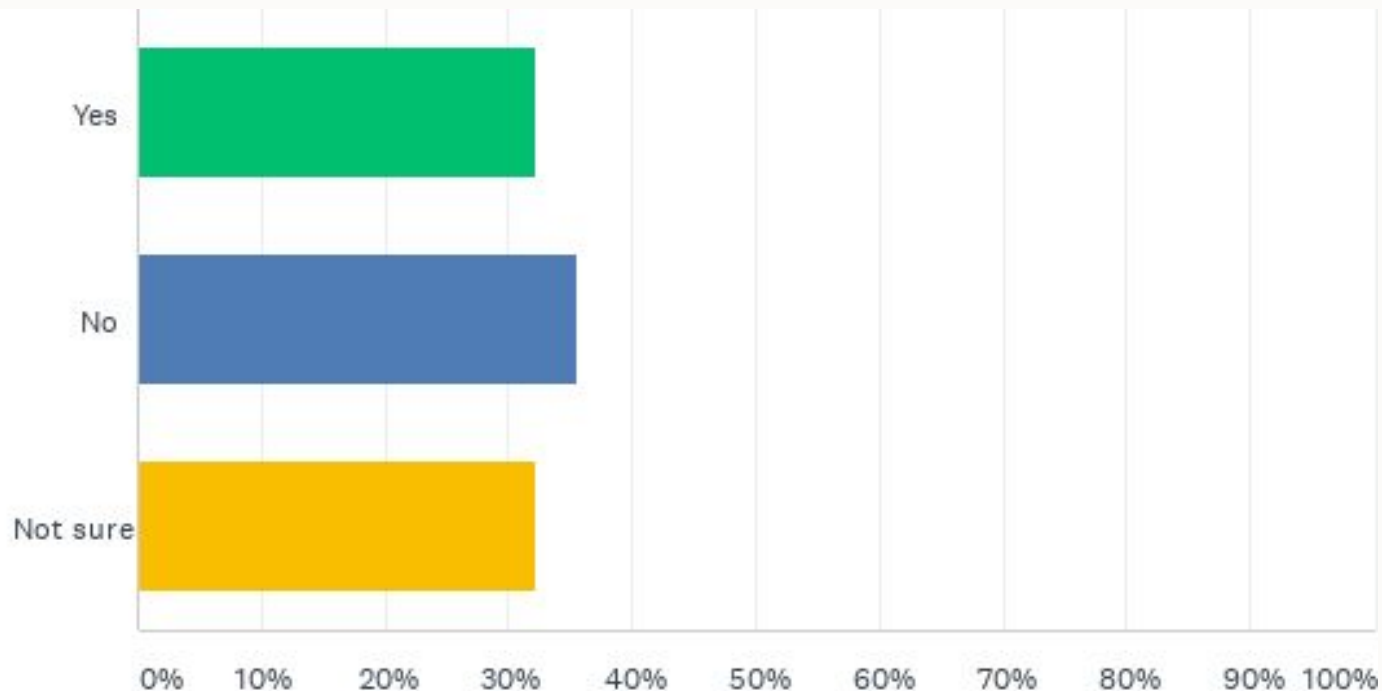
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Parkinson's Disease	33.61%	123
Multiple Sclerosis	15.57%	57
PTSD with Veterans	28.96%	106
Anxiety Disorders with Trauma Survivors	37.98%	139
Dementia/Alzheimers Disease	36.34%	133
General fitness for senior adults	87.16%	319
Arthritis/ inflammatory disease	41.26%	151
Total Respondents: 366		

How important do you find movement practices/activities when speaking with patients about their general health/well-being?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 541



Would you be willing to offer a dance or movement experience (such as Yoga or Pilates) to your patients/residents in the next 6 months?



Survey Implications:

Connections with other sectors provides mutual benefits

- Regarding dance and healthcare, respondents had an impressive level of awareness about the numerous ways dance can provide benefits to major medical issues.
 - There is growing interest in providing movement opportunities in healthcare settings and in collaboration across the two sectors. Let's remain in conversation about the possibilities!
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Survey Participant Demographics

- **Race:** 80% of respondents self identified as Caucasian;
 - 20% self identified as BIPOC.

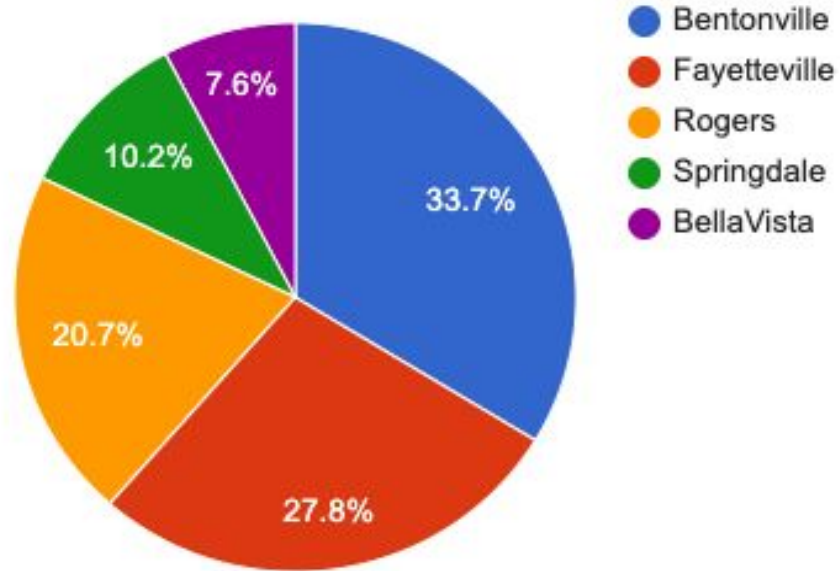
 - **Well educated:** 73% indicated a education level of a college degree or higher.

 - 79% identified as female, and the largest age group (40%) were between the ages of 35-54.

 - **Income varied** and almost 20% chose “I Prefer not to answer.” Of those who did indicate income level, the largest group, 25% have incomes between \$60,000-\$90,000.
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Survey Participants Zip Codes

Responses by Zip Code



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This PowerPoint Presentation is available at:

<https://www.experimentalhouse.com/news>

For more information, or to request the full data set please
contact Karen Castleman at: karenjcastleman@gmail.com

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Perspective From the Field: Blake Worthey

