OPUS I FOUNDATION

EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST

U.S. Arts Education Accessibility Survey Report

2024

>1%

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE U.S. ARTS & CULTURE ECONOMY

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Today, the arts currently employ around 4.8 million people in the United States. **People with disabilities represent** approximately 39,070 of them -- **less than 1% of the total workforce.**

Despite opportunities for people with diverse abilities having been expanded since the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), these individuals struggle to access education and/or obtain careers in the arts. Over 80% of arts venues & festivals still exclude disabled artists from their programming and operations, minimizing the effects of the ADA and its impact in the field.

Furthermore, only 11 states in the union have repealed the Fair Labors Standard Act (FLSA), which allows employers to pay subminimum wage to those "... impaired by a physical or mental disability, including those related to age or injury, for the work to be performed." This act legalizes the unequal pay of disabled artists, who earn about 13% less on average than their non-disabled peers, and require 28% more income to attain equal living standards.

Recognizing the inherent creative potential in every person, **Everyone is an Artist** creates space for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities to find their voice, share their story, and contribute their unique talents towards building a stronger arts & culture community.

The intention of our national education survey is to qualify and quantify the current arts education environment for people with disabilities in the United States, identifying barriers to access, gaps in resources, and opportunities for systemic change. By gathering data from students, educators, institutions, and arts organizations, we aim to better understand the challenges faced by disabled individuals in pursuing arts education and careers.

Our survey explored key areas:

Accessibility of Arts Education: Evaluating the availability of adaptive learning tools, inclusive curriculum design, and physical accessibility in arts programs.

Representation and Inclusion: Assessing the participation of disabled students and professionals in arts institutions, as well as the presence of disabled artists in leadership and decision-making roles.

Institutional Policies and Compliance: Measuring adherence to the ADA and other regulations, while identifying best practices and areas for policy improvement.

The findings from this survey are outlined in this report which, we hope, will serve as a roadmap for arts institutions, educators, policymakers, and advocates to drive meaningful change. Our goal is to foster an arts ecosystem where all individuals — regardless of ability — have equitable access to education, creative expression, and professional opportunities.

HIGHLIGHTS

1,154
Survey Participants Across the Abilities Spectrum.

54%
Called for More Adaptive Equipment & Tools in Arts Education Settings.

2 in 3
Said Accessible Learning Facilities were Limited or Unavailable in Their Community.

82%
Expressed Interest in Professional Development Opportunities.

876
Survey Participants Want Standardized Integrative Arts Education Programs.

60%
Identified Financial Barriers as a Major Obstacle.

71%
Believe the Government and Private Sector should Fund Inclusive Ats Education.

0
Institutions Conducted Annual Accessibility Assessments or Surveys.

METHODOLOGY

Opus 1 Foundation designed and conducted a nationwide online survey through its official website over a structured nine-month period in 2024. The methodology followed a strategic, phased approach to ensure a broad and diverse range of participants, including artists, educators, students, and policymakers. The survey aimed to collect critical insights into accessibility and arts education while maintaining inclusivity and engagement throughout the process.

The survey framework was modeled after Dillman's **Total Design Method (TDM)**, a widely recognized approach for maximizing survey response rates and ensuring data reliability. This method emphasized strategic participant outreach, multiple contact points, and user-friendly design to encourage participation across various demographics.

The initiative began with survey design and pilot testing to refine the questionnaire, ensuring that it comprehensively addressed key concerns related to accessibility, education, and employment in the arts. The pilot phase involved 150 participants across different demographics to test clarity and accessibility, leading to refinements that improved overall survey usability. The survey was embedded within Opus 1's website, making it easily accessible to participants across the country. To reach a wider audience, the foundation leveraged a multi-channel outreach strategy, incorporating email campaigns (which reached over 25,000 recipients), social media promotions (engaging approximately 12,000 individuals), and direct engagement with 7 partner organizations that advocate for accessibility in the arts.

To maximize participation and inclusivity, Opus 1 provided the survey in multiple accessible formats, including text-based versions, audio recordings, video-based sign language translations, and downloadable braille-compatible documents. Additionally, the survey was made available in two languages (English, Spanish) ensuring broader accessibility for diverse communities.

Data collection was divided into three key phases. The initial outreach and engagement phase (Months 1-3) focused on widespread promotion and early responses. The midpoint analysis (Months 4-6) involved targeted follow-ups with underrepresented groups to ensure diverse participation. The final phase (Months 7-9) consolidated data and encouraged last-minute submissions, ultimately bringing the total number of valid responses to 1,154. Throughout the process, data visualization tools tracked response trends and identified gaps in outreach, allowing Opus 1 to adjust strategies as needed.

Once data collection was complete, responses were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Statistical analysis tools were employed to identify key patterns, while qualitative feedback from over 500 open-ended responses provided deeper insights into lived experiences. The results were then compiled into this report, highlighting barriers, opportunities, and actionable recommendations for improving accessibility and inclusion in the arts.

FRAMEWORK

Demographic Information

Age
Gender
Ethnicity
Status
Location
Education Level

Arts Education Participation

Field of Study
Location

Accessibility in Arts Education

Accessibility Analysis
Top Challenges Observed
Accommodations

Technology and Accessibility

Use of Assistive Technologies
Virtual and Hybrid Program Accessibility

Support and Resources
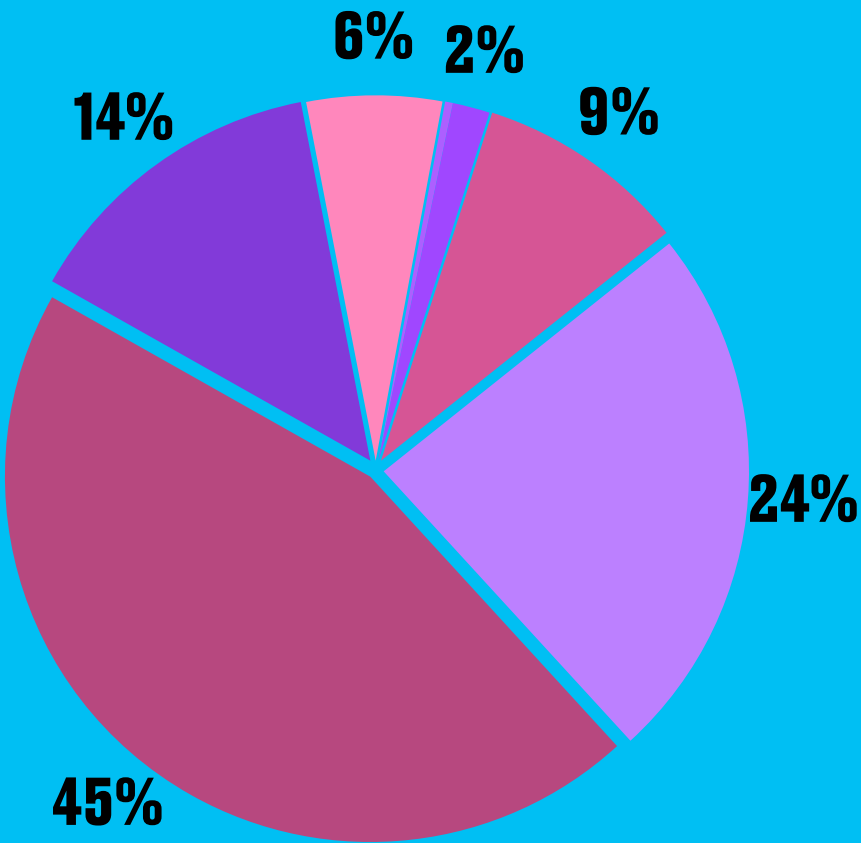
Support Received
Additional Resources Needed

Open-Ended Feedback

Free Form Responses
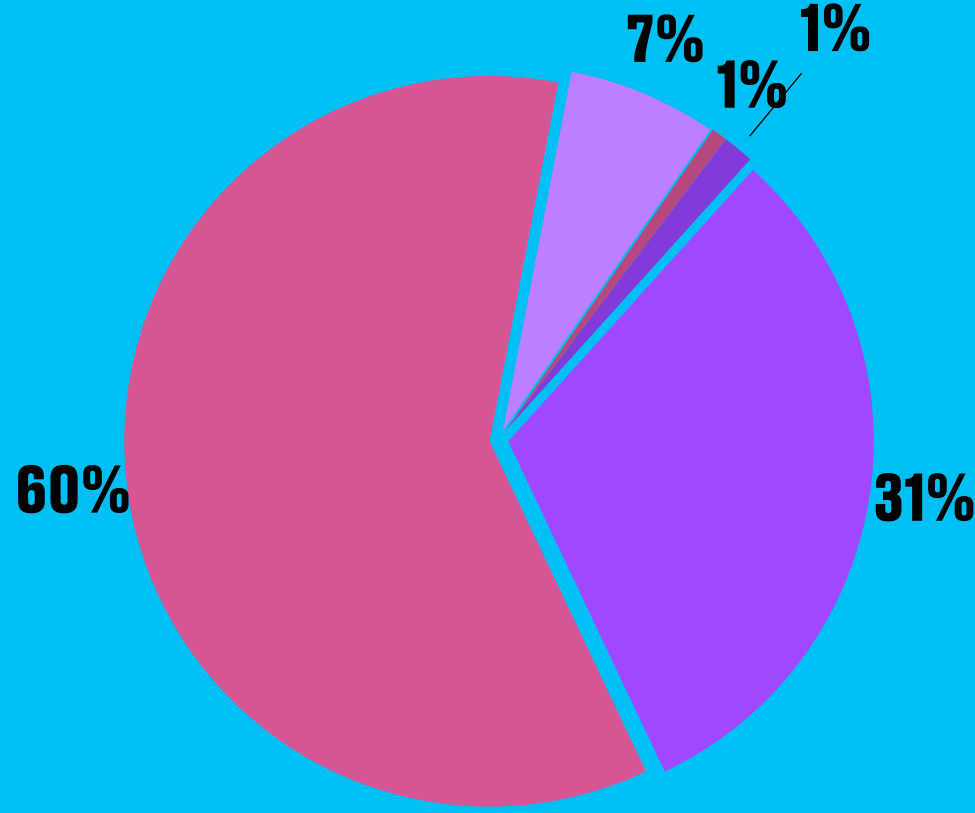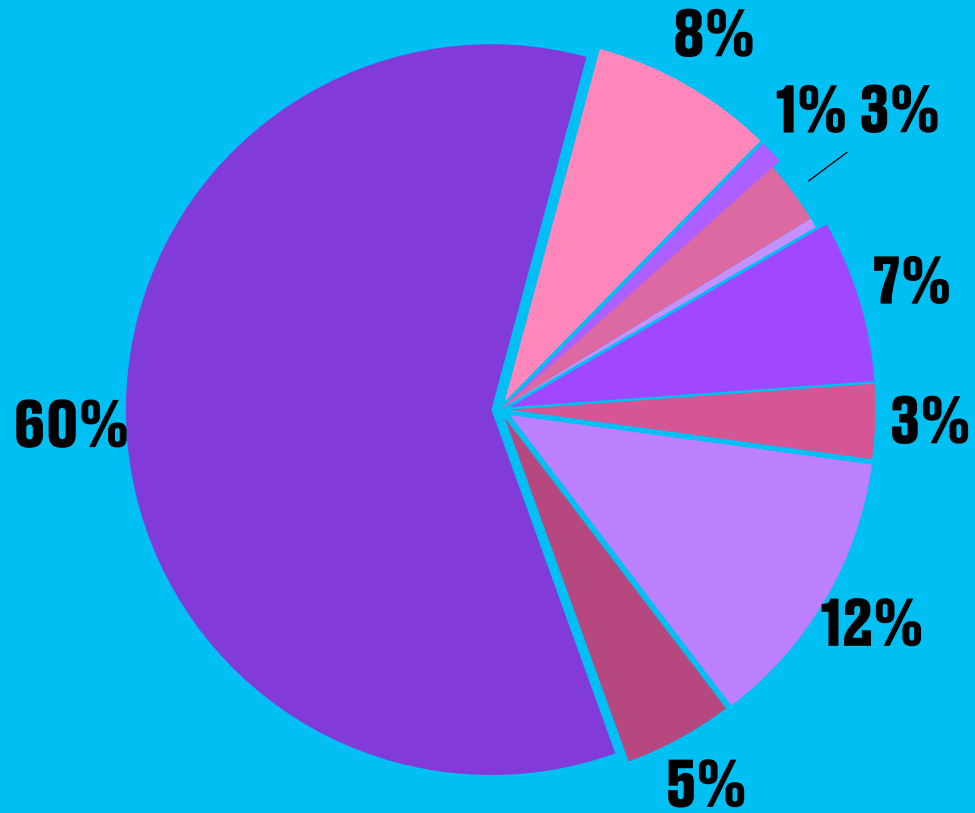Shared Experiences & Suggestions

SURVEY FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE

- 6%
- 2%
- 14%
- 9%
- 24%
- 45%

Legend:
- 12 - 18
- 19 - 25
- 26 - 33
- 34 - 40
- 41 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60+

GENDER

- 7%
- 1%
- 1%
- 60%
- 31%

Legend:
- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Transgender
- Prefer Not to Say

ETHNICITY

- 8%
- 1%
- 3%
- 7%
- 3%
- 60%
- 12%
- 5%

Legend:
- African American
- South Asian American
- East Asian American
- Latin American
- European American
- Middle Eastern American
- Native American
- Mixed Ethnicity
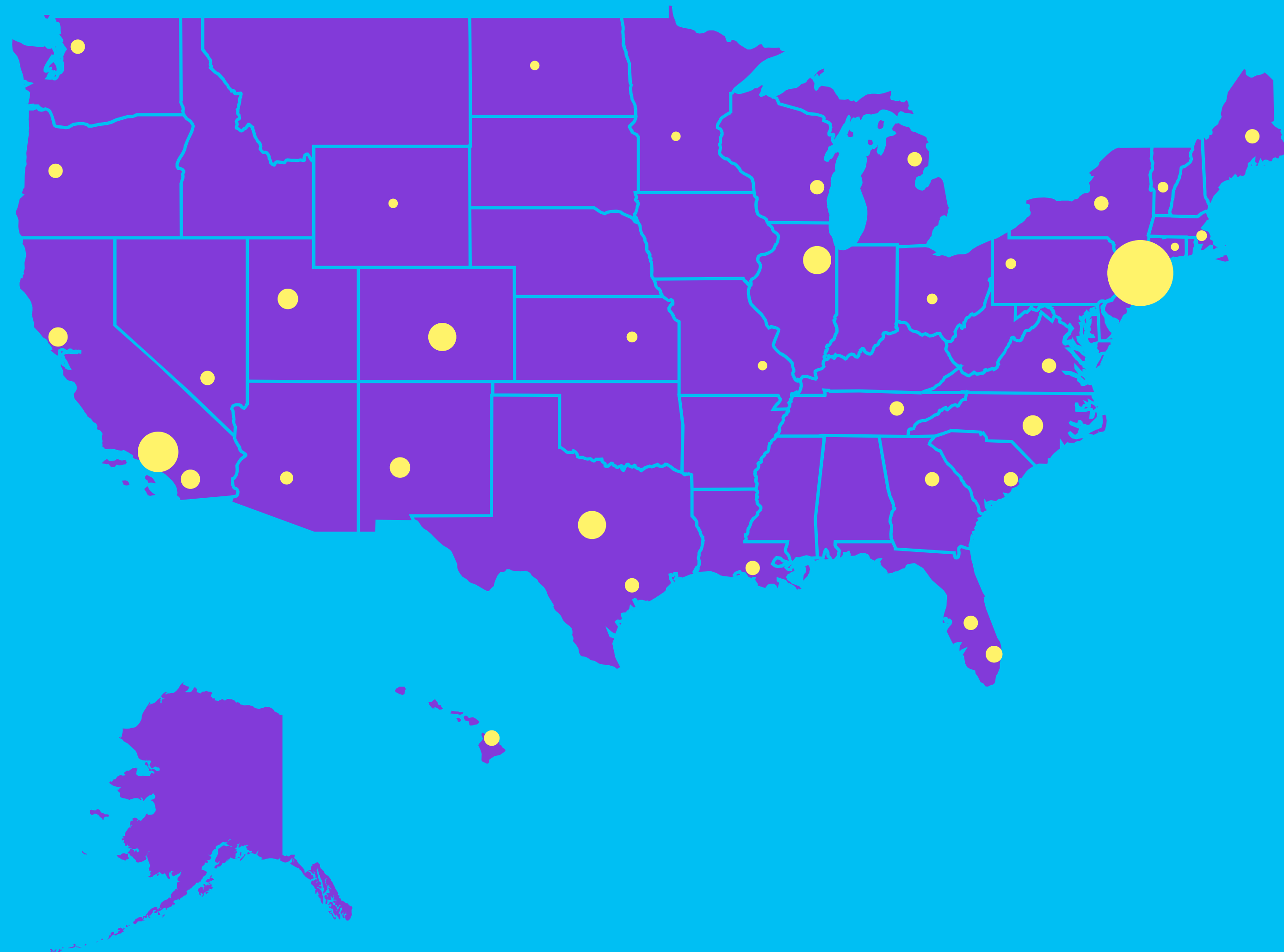- Prefer Not to Say

STATUS

- 5%
- 67%
- 27%
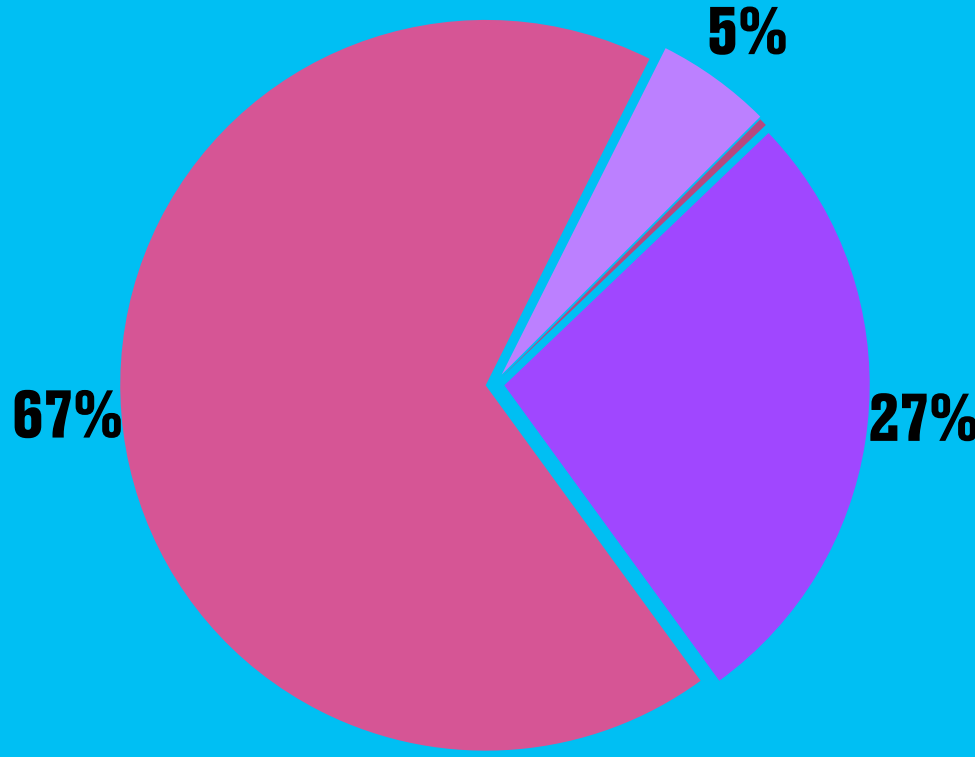
Legend:
- Non-Disabled
- Disabled
- Diversely-Abled
- Prefer Not to Say

Demographic Information

LOCATION

NORTHEAST
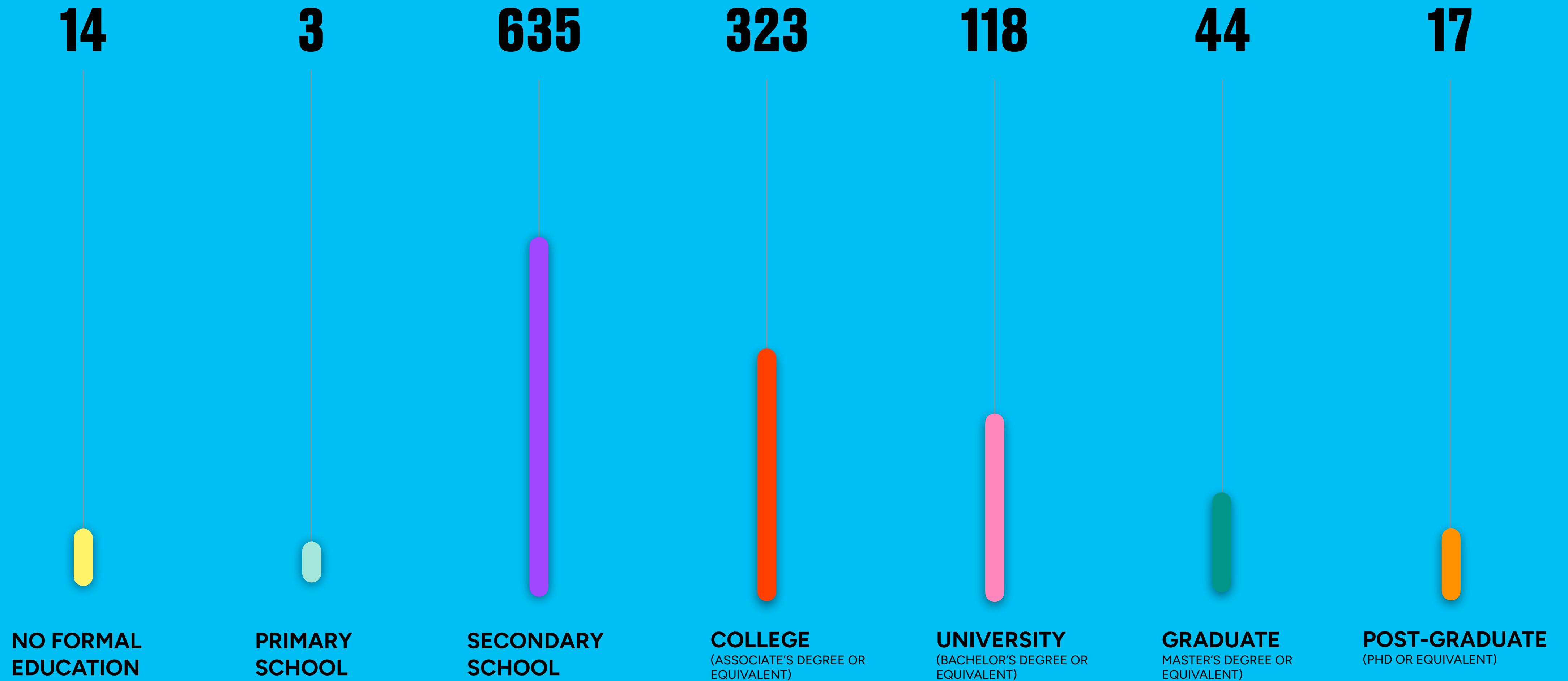462

SOUTH
231

MIDWEST
116

WEST
297

PACIFIC
28

Demographic Information

Highest Level of Education Completed

14   **3**   **635**   **323**   **118**   **44**   **17**

NO FORMAL EDUCATION

PRIMARY SCHOOL

SECONDARY SCHOOL

COLLEGE
(ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT)

UNIVERSITY
(BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT)

GRADUATE
MASTER'S DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT)

POST-GRADUATE
(PHD OR EQUIVALENT)

Arts Education Participation

FIELD OF STUDY

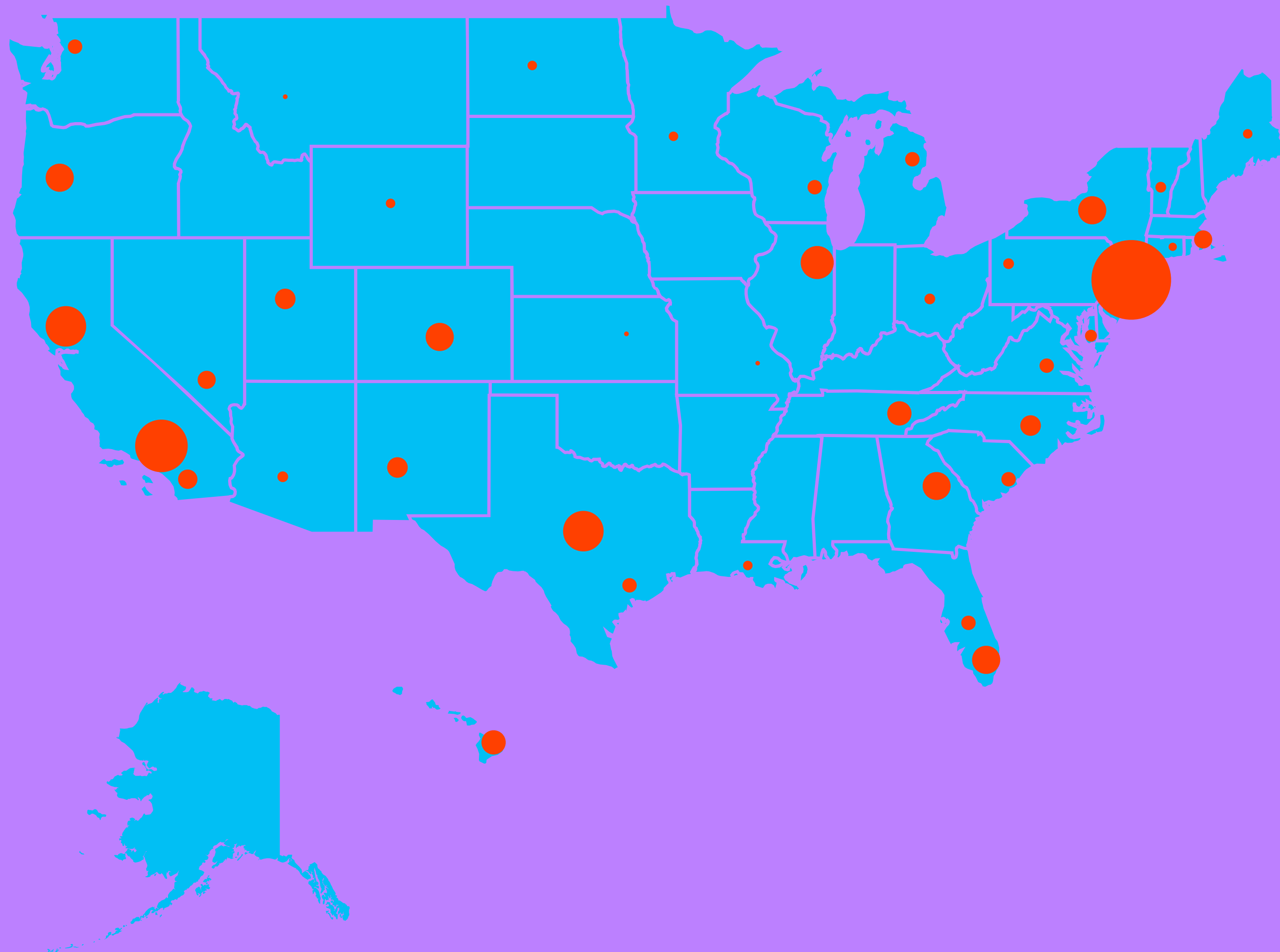| Field	Value
PERFORMING ARTS	349
VISUAL ARTS	232
LITERARY ARTS	59
MEDIA ARTS	268
CULTURAL & FOLK ARTS	18
INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS	101
ARCHITECTURAL ARTS	17
FASHION & TEXTILE ARTS	11
CULINARY ARTS	8
ENVIRONMENTAL & BIO ARTS	4
DIGITAL ARTS	73
STREET ARTS	5
OTHER	9

Arts Education Participation

LOCATION

NORTHEAST

523

SOUTH

116

MIDWEST

83

WEST

397

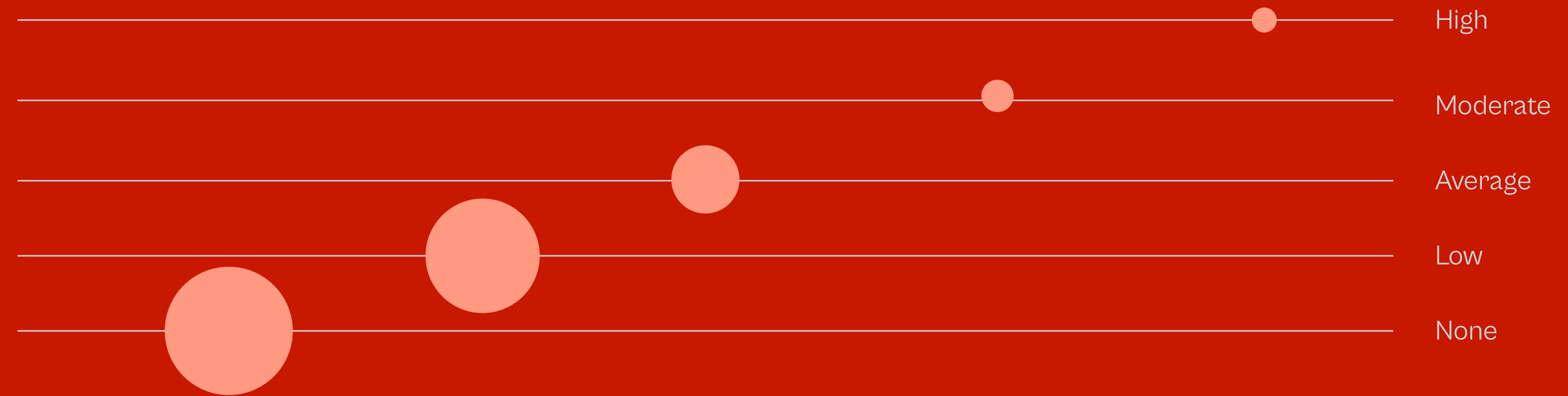PACIFIC

35

Accessibility in Arts Education

Accessibility Analysis

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

Facility Access

Transportation Access
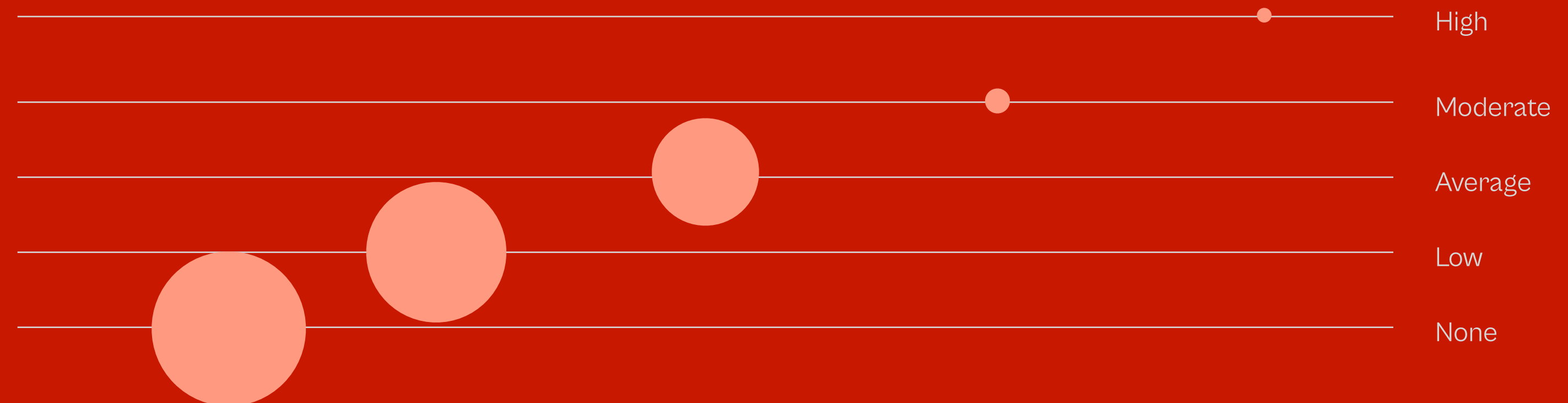
High

Moderate

Average

Low

None

SENSORY ACCESSIBILITY

Visual Accommodations

Auditory Accommodations

Lighting & Sound Modifications

High

Moderate

Average

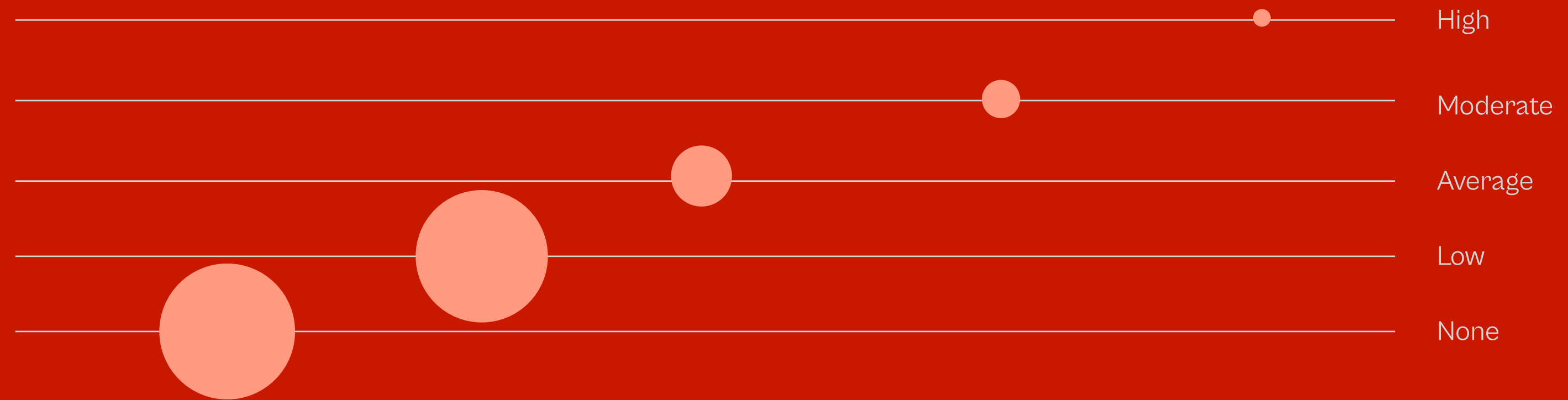Low

None

Accessibility in Arts Education

Accessibility Analysis

NEURODIVERSITY ACCESSIBILITY

Simplified and Structured Instructions

Flexible Participation Options

Sensory Regulation Supports

High

Moderate

Average

Low

None

FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

Affordability of Programs

Availability of Financial Aid

Cost of Transportation & Materials

High

Moderate

Average

Low

None
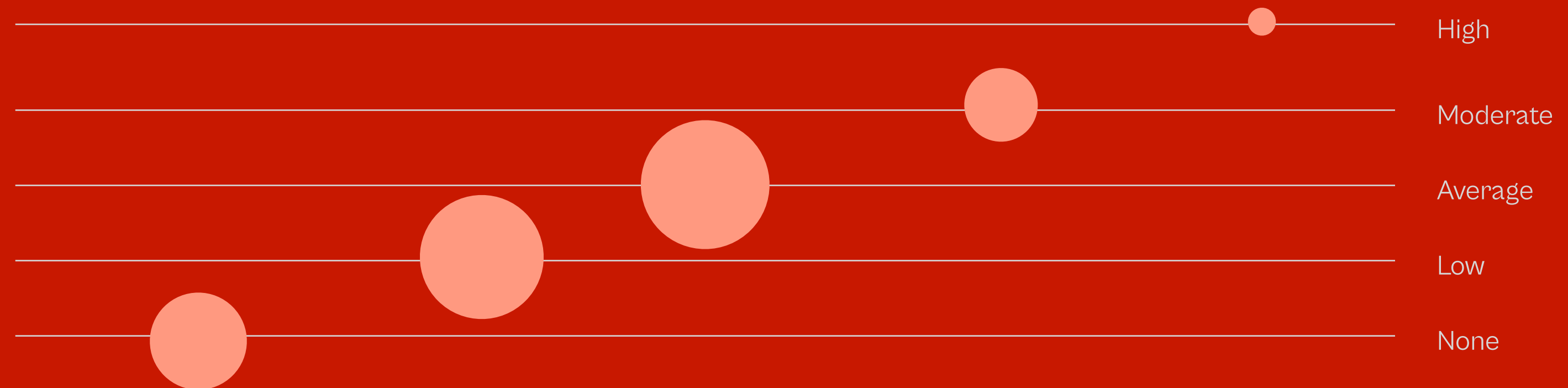
Accessibility in Arts Education

Accessibility Analysis

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Online Learning Accessibility

Hybrid/Remote Learning Options

Assistive Technology Integration

High

Moderate

Average

Low

None

PROGRAMMATIC ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusive Curriculum & Teaching Methods

Trained Staff & Educators

Flexible Scheduling & Attendance Policies

High

Moderate

Average

Low

None

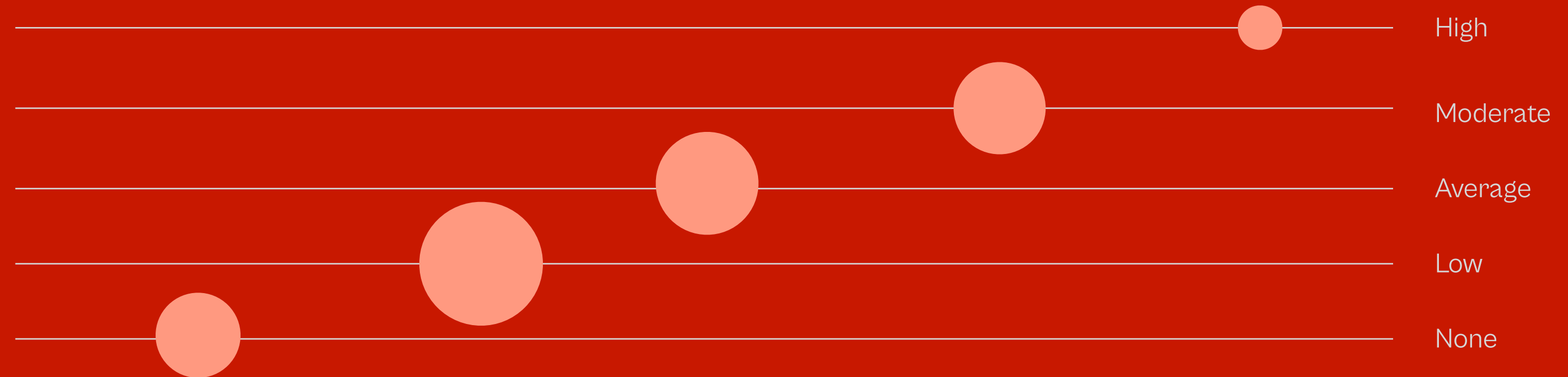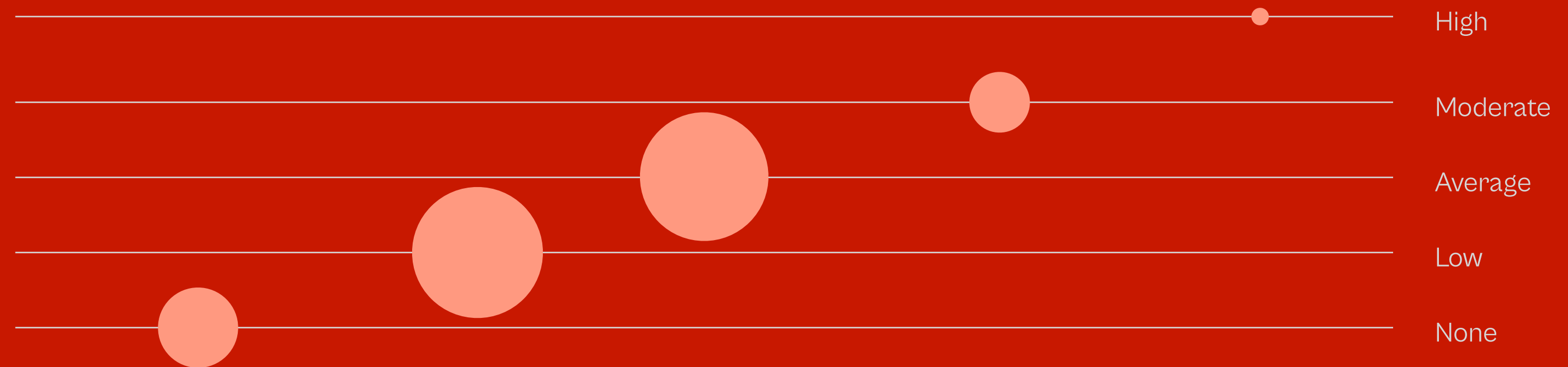# Accessibility in Arts Education

Top Challenges Observed

PHYSICAL CHALLENGES

48% of facilities have full ADA compliance (ramps, elevators, accessible seating, restrooms)

433 feet/132 m to accessible public transportation on average

31% of programs have accessible classrooms and studios

SENSORY CHALLENGES

2% of programs offer sign language interpretation or live captioning* (*online only)

16% of facilities have assistive listening devices or sound adjustments

35% of facilities have braille, large print, and tactile resources

33% of programs offer sensory-friendly adaptations (quiet spaces, adjusted lighting/sound)

NEURODIVERSITY CHALLENGES

11% of programs use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles

>1% of institutions have staff trained in neurodiversity inclusion

5% of programs offering self-paced or flexible learning options

4% of participants reported having difficulty understanding course materials or instructions

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Average cost of participation in arts programs is $23,500 USD/year

26% of participants who received financial aid or scholarships

1 in 10 programs has a subsidized or free learning option

Additional monthly costs were $500 on average for accessibility needs (transportation, personal aides, technology)

6 in 10 participants who identify as 'disabled' claimed affordability was a participation factor.

DIGITAL CHALLENGES

10% of digital platforms compatible were screen readers and assistive technologies

20% of programs offering remote or hybrid learning options

Average satisfaction rating of 'Neutral-Low' for accessibility of digital platforms

3% of online courses with captions, transcripts, and keyboard navigations

PROGRAMMATIC CHALLENGES

20% of institutions with a formal accessibility policy

Less than 5% of educators trained in inclusive teaching practices

No institutions conducted annual accessibility audits or collect participant feedback

Accessibility in Arts Education

Accommodations

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

896 participants claimed that they required physical access accommodations. Their top five preferences ranked in the following order:

1. Ramps & Elevators

2. Accessible Classrooms & Workspaces

3. Reserved Accessible Seating

4. Proximity to Public Transportation Hubs

5. Clear Pathways

The **supermajority of these participants (76%) stated that facilities aimed to make accommodations** based on their individual access needs. However, **only 13% reported accommodations having been made successfully.**

When asked *"How satisfied are you with the physical accessibility of your arts education spaces?"* on a scale from 1 (Not satisfied at all) to 10 (Highly satisfied), an **average rating of 3.5** was calculated.

SENSORY ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

137 participants claimed that they required some form of sensory access accommodations. Their top five needs ranked in the following order:

1. Assistive listening devices

2. Sensory-friendly spaces (quiet areas, dim lighting, reduced noise)

3. Braille or large-print materials

4. Live captioning or transcripts

5. Sign language interpreters

When asked *"How effective were sensory accommodations in your arts program?"* on a scale from 1 (Not effective at all) to 10 (Highly effective), an **average rating of 7** was calculated.

Accessibility in Arts Education

Accommodations

NEURODIVERSITY ACCOMMODATIONS

422 participants claimed that they required alternative learning formats. Their top five preferences ranked in the following order:

1. Simplified language and instructions

2. Hands-on or interactive learning alternatives

3. Visual schedules or step-by-step guides

4. Extended time for tasks and assignments

5. Availability of breaks during sessions

The **supermajority of these participants (68%) stated that programs did not make accommodations** based on their individual access needs.

When asked *"How accessible do you find instructional materials in your arts education programs?"* on a scale from 1 (Not accessible at all) to 10 (Highly accessible), an **average rating of 4** was calculated.

FINANCIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

291 participants reported that they required financial assistance to participate in arts education programs. Their top five requirements ranked as:

1. Full or partial scholarships

2. Stipends for personal aides or support staff

3. Grants for adaptive equipment and technology

4. Free or subsidized transportation

5. Sliding scale tuition fees

About **52% of participants stated that they were unable to secure financial assistance**. For those who did receive aid, an approximate 90% savings in total out-of-pocket expense was noted.

When asked *"How affordable do you find current arts education programs given your financial situation?"* on a scale from 1 (Not affordable at all) to 10 (Very affordable), an **average rating of 4** was calculated.

Accessibility in Arts Education

Accommodations

TECHNOLOGICAL ACCOMMODATIONS

103 participants claimed that they required digital accessibility tools. Their top five tools ranked in the following order:

1. Screen reader-compatible platforms

2. Recorded lessons for flexible access

3. Visual schedules or step-by-step guides

4. High-contrast mode or text resizing

5. Remote learning access with ASL interpretation/captioning

The **majority of these participants (51%) stated that programs did attempt to make accommodations** based on their individual access needs, with **recorded lessons** being the most fulfilled request.

When asked *"How essential do you find digital platforms and tools to be in arts education settings?"* on a scale from 1 (Not essential at all) to 10 (Very essential), an **average rating of 8** was calculated.

PROGRAMMATIC ACCOMMODATIONS

478 participants stated that they could only participate in programs with social support. Their top five forms of support ranked as:

1. Small-group or one-on-one instruction options

2. Disability awareness training for staff and students

3. Disability representation among instructors/staff

4. Peer mentorship programs

5. Community-building workshops

76% of participants stated that they would have had better program experiences if an integrated learning setting were available to them. For those who identified as 'disabled' or 'diversely-abled', the percentage increased by 15 points to 91%.

When asked *"How included do you feel in your arts education environment"* on a scale from 1 (Not included at all) to 10 (Fully included), an **average rating of 3** was calculated.

TECHNOLOGY + ACCESSIBILITY

Technology + Accessibility

A survey section on assistive technology use in arts education revealed that while **65% of respondents were aware** of available assistive tools, **45% had never been informed** about their existence, highlighting a significant communication gap. Many students who could benefit from these technologies lacked access simply due to a lack of awareness.

Among the most commonly used assistive technologies, **screen readers and text-to-speech software** were the most prevalent (40%), followed by **live captioning and transcription services** (35%), **adaptive musical instruments and art tools** (30%), **speech-to-text software** (25%), and **Braille or large-print materials** (20%). Despite their availability, effectiveness varied. On a scale of 1 to 10, screen readers received the highest satisfaction rating at **8.2**, while speech-to-text tools were rated the lowest at **6.2**, suggesting a need for further refinement and better implementation. One respondent noted, *"Using an adaptive keyboard allowed me to compose music independently for the first time. I wish more programs provided access to such tools."*

However, **barriers to effective usage remain a significant issue**. Nearly **48% of respondents reported that assistive technologies were either unavailable or too limited** within their programs, while **35% cited a lack of training** as a major challenge. Additionally, **30% mentioned cost and funding limitations** as obstacles to acquiring necessary tools. A respondent reflected on their experience, saying, *"I was given access to a screen reader, but no one taught me how to use it, so I stopped trying after a while."* This suggests that merely providing assistive technologies is insufficient without the proper training and support systems in place.

To improve accessibility, respondents identified several key areas for development. **58% advocated for increased funding**, while **50% emphasized the importance of training for both students and instructors**. **40% called for regular software updates**, ensuring that technology remains effective and compatible with modern devices, and **35% requested a wider range of assistive tools** to accommodate different disabilities. Additionally, **30% supported a more personalized approach**, where students receive tailored technology recommendations based on their specific needs.

These findings suggest that while assistive technologies have the potential to enhance accessibility in arts education, gaps in awareness, training, and funding limit their impact. **Better communication, investment in updated technology, and structured training programs** could significantly improve outcomes for students across the abilities spectrum. Moreover, fostering partnerships with accessibility experts and technology developers could help arts education institutions stay ahead of evolving needs.

Virtual + Hybrid Program Accessibility

Virtual and hybrid arts education programs have become increasingly common, yet accessibility challenges persist for individuals across the abilities spectrum. This report examined levels of awareness, technological barriers, effectiveness of accommodations, and areas for improvement. Survey data showed that while **65% of respondents were aware of accessibility features available in their programs, 45% reported never receiving information about these resources.** Despite increased adoption of digital accessibility tools, only 55% of programs provided clear guidelines on how to use them, and 30% of respondents had difficulty locating accessibility settings within learning platforms. These findings highlight the need for clearer instructions and user-friendly interfaces to enhance accessibility.

Participants identified the most commonly used accessibility features, including **live captioning and transcription services** (50%), **screen readers and text-to-speech software** (35%), **ASL interpretation and video relay services** (30%), **adjustable font sizes and high-contrast display modes** (25%), and **flexible pacing with asynchronous learning options** (20%). The effectiveness of these features varied, with live captioning receiving the highest rating (7.8 out of 10), followed by screen readers (7.2), ASL interpretation (6.9), adjustable display settings (6.5), and asynchronous learning options (6.0). While captioning and screen reader tools were rated as generally effective, asynchronous learning options received lower scores due to lack of engagement and difficulty accessing instructor support. One participant noted, *"Live captioning is a great tool, but it often struggles with artistic terminology and accents, making it less reliable in certain courses."*

Despite the availability of accessibility tools, several barriers to equitable participation were identified. Internet connectivity and device limitations were a significant issue, with 45% of respondents reporting unreliable access, particularly in lower-income communities. Platform incompatibility was another major concern, with 35% of participants encountering accessibility tools that did not function properly within certain learning platforms. Additionally, 30% of respondents cited a lack of technical support, making it difficult to troubleshoot accessibility features. Engagement challenges also emerged, with 25% expressing frustration over the lack of interactive and social elements in virtual learning environments, making participation more difficult for disabled students. One respondent shared, *"I rely on ASL interpretation, but the delay in virtual platforms makes real-time participation frustrating and difficult."*

To improve accessibility in virtual and hybrid arts education programs, several key recommendations emerged. **Improving internet and device access was a priority for 50% of respondents, who advocated for subsidized internet services or device loans to bridge the digital divide**. **Standardizing accessibility features across learning platforms was another significant need, with 40% calling for more universal settings to ensure compatibility.** Additionally, 35% of respondents emphasized the need for ongoing training and technical support for both students and educators. To address engagement challenges, 30% recommended incorporating more interactive and social features, such as virtual breakout rooms or collaborative digital workspaces. Finally, **25% requested improvements in AI-driven captioning accuracy and better integration of live ASL interpretation into virtual classrooms.**

Support + Resources

Access to adequate support and resources is a crucial factor in ensuring equitable participation in arts education programs.

Survey findings indicate that while some institutions provide structured accessibility support, **significant gaps remain in resource availability, technical assistance, and institutional responsiveness to the needs of disabled participants.**

Approximately **55% of respondents reported having access to dedicated accessibility support services, such as disability coordinators or help desks, while 45% stated they had no formalized support structure, often relying on informal assistance from instructors or peers.** The lack of centralized accessibility resources led to inconsistent experiences, with some students benefiting from well-established accommodations while others faced challenges in obtaining necessary support.

Technical support for accessibility tools emerged as a significant issue. Although many programs offered assistive technologies like screen readers, live captions, and alternative navigation options, 40% of respondents reported difficulties in troubleshooting these features due to inadequate guidance. Additionally, 35% of participants found that their institutions lacked specialized support staff trained in digital accessibility, leading to delays in addressing accessibility-related concerns. One respondent noted, *"When I encountered issues with my screen reader during a class, there was no one available to help me troubleshoot in real-time, which made it impossible to participate fully."* These findings suggest an urgent need for dedicated accessibility support teams with expertise in assistive technology.

Support + Resources

Beyond technical assistance, the availability of learning resources in accessible formats varied widely. While **30% of respondents reported that course materials were regularly provided in multiple formats** — such as transcripts for video content, alt-text for images, and structured digital documents — 70% indicated that such resources were either inconsistently available or entirely absent. Some participants expressed frustration with the reliance on inaccessible PDFs, uncaptioned video content, or learning management systems that did not support screen readers effectively. A student shared, *"I often have to request accessible materials separately, which causes delays in my coursework compared to my peers."* The lack of proactive accessibility measures in resource distribution places additional burdens on disabled students, reinforcing inequities in learning experiences.

Institutional responsiveness and faculty training also played a significant role in determining accessibility outcomes. Sixty-percent (60%) of respondents indicated that instructors were generally supportive of accessibility requests, and **only 10% believed that faculty had received adequate training in accessible teaching practices.** Many students noted that while individual instructors made efforts to accommodate their needs, the absence of formal institutional policies often led to inconsistencies in support. One participant explained, *"Some instructors are very accommodating, but others don't seem to know how to make their lessons accessible, which puts the responsibility on me [the student] to figure things out."* Expanding faculty training in universal design for learning (UDL) and accessibility best practices could help bridge this gap and ensure more consistent support across programs.

To improve accessibility support and resources, several recommendations emerged. First, institutions should establish **dedicated accessibility support teams** that specialize in assistive technology and digital accessibility. Second, programs must ensure **all learning materials are provided in multiple accessible formats by default**, rather than requiring students to request them individually. Third, faculty and staff should receive **comprehensive training on accessibility best practices and inclusive teaching strategies** to create a more equitable learning environment. Lastly, institutions should develop **clear, standardized policies for accessibility accommodations** to eliminate inconsistencies in support.

While some progress has been made in providing accessibility support and resources, significant gaps remain in technical assistance, accessible materials, and faculty training. Strengthening these areas through proactive institutional policies and dedicated support systems will be essential to ensuring equitable participation for people with disabilities or those who identify as *diversely-abled* in arts education programs.

Open-Ended Feedback

Highlights

Participants in our 2024 survey also provided broad feedback on their experiences in arts education programs. These insights cover issues related to accessibility, engagement, support, and the overall inclusivity of arts education across all fields. Their feedback highlights the need for continued efforts to ensure that students across the abilities spectrum have equal opportunities to engage in and benefit from the full spectrum of arts education. Below are the key themes of the feedback section from the survey with some highlighted responses:

Inclusion and Representation in Arts Education

"Many arts programs still cater primarily to non-disabled students. While there is some recognition of our needs, it often feels like an afterthought. More inclusion from the start, in both curriculum and classroom design, would be appreciated."

"The arts have the power to make people feel seen and understood. For me, it's about feeling represented in the subject matter, the teaching approach, and in the diversity of the art being taught."

"It would be great if disabled artists were highlighted more in the curriculum—not just as a footnote, but as central figures in the development of art."

Diversity of Expression and Teaching Methods

"The traditional ways of teaching the arts often don't reflect the different ways people create. There needs to be more flexibility in how students can express themselves, such as through different mediums and modalities beyond just visual or auditory."

"I often feel constrained by the traditional approach to arts education. Not all students think, learn, or create the same way, and it's important for instructors to adapt to a range of learning styles."

"Art is personal, and it should be a process, not just about the final product. I'd like to see programs that focus on nurturing creativity in a way that's accessible to everyone, no matter their abilities."

Open-Ended Feedback

Highlights

Support Structures and Institutional Commitment

"Some institutions have made a lot of progress in supporting disabled students, but others are still lagging behind. Accessibility needs to be integrated into the fabric of the program, not just a patchwork of accommodations that happen on a case-by-case basis."

"It would be amazing if arts programs made more resources available to students ahead of time, like ensuring that we have accessible tools, materials, and equipment before classes even begin."

"I appreciate when institutions create designated support staff for accessibility, but there needs to be a broader institutional commitment to embedding accessibility into every level of the program, from the administration to the faculty."

Access to Assistive Technologies and Tools

"While there is some assistive technology available, it often doesn't fully integrate with the tools I need. For example, screen readers and digital art programs don't always work together well, which limits my ability to create as fully as I would like."

"Having access to adaptive tools like voice-controlled software, screen readers, and braille materials for visual arts is vital. But I often struggle with getting those resources in a timely manner, which delays my work."

"It would be great to have more options for creating art in accessible formats, such as audio descriptions for visual arts or tactile elements for sculptures. This would enhance the learning experience and allow more people to participate."

Open-Ended Feedback

Highlights

Social and Peer Support in Arts Education

"Peer support is so important in arts education. Disabled students often rely on each other to navigate the challenges we face in traditional classrooms. Creating spaces where students can connect and share their experiences would make a huge difference."

"Having a peer network, or even mentorship programs, could help disabled students feel less isolated and more empowered in the arts community."

"Arts education should not just focus on individual achievement but also on building community. Programs should foster collaboration and support systems that are inclusive of all students."

Instructor Training and Awareness

"Some instructors are amazing at making their classes accessible, while others are not as informed. More comprehensive training for all faculty on disability awareness and inclusive teaching strategies would create a more supportive environment for disabled students."

"I wish instructors would recognize that accessibility isn't just about providing accommodations when asked—it's about actively designing classes with inclusivity in mind from the beginning."

"It's important that instructors are open to feedback about accessibility and that they work with students to ensure that the learning environment is genuinely inclusive. Sometimes, I feel like I have to be the one to bring up the issue."

Open-Ended Feedback

Highlights

Collaborative Opportunities and Group Work

"Group projects can be difficult for students with disabilities if there aren't any guidelines in place for inclusive collaboration. More structure around how group work can be done in a way that accommodates everyone would be beneficial."

"In group art projects, I sometimes feel like I'm an afterthought. It's hard to be included in creative collaboration if the project is not designed to accommodate my needs."

"It would be helpful to have clear guidelines for group work that ensure all students, regardless of ability, are able to participate meaningfully in the creative process."

Community and Institutional Engagement

"There is a strong need for arts institutions to engage with disabled artists and students in a more meaningful way. Beyond just accommodating needs, there should be an ongoing dialogue about how to make art programs more inclusive and representative."

"I would love to see more collaboration between arts programs and disability advocacy groups. This could help bridge the gap between what is offered in art education and what disabled artists truly need to succeed."

"More opportunities for disabled artists to showcase their work in both academic and professional settings would be a positive step in making the art world more inclusive."

Conclusion

The findings from this survey in 2024 provided valuable insights into the current state of accessibility in arts education across a wide spectrum of programs and educational settings. The responses from individuals with disabilities highlight both progress made and challenges that persist in ensuring equitable access to the arts. From traditional in-person classrooms to virtual and hybrid models, it is clear that while many programs are making strides toward inclusivity, there remains a significant need for ongoing attention to accessibility issues.

In terms of accessibility features, respondents expressed a need for more comprehensive, proactive integration of assistive technologies and accommodations. While some institutions have made strides in offering tools and resources, there is a consistent call for programs to prioritize universal design from the outset, rather than relying on reactive measures. Ensuring that all students — whether they are learning online or in-person — have access to the tools, resources, and support they need is crucial for fostering an inclusive learning environment.

The survey also shed light on the diversity of needs within the arts education community, with feedback suggesting that arts programs should embrace a more flexible, individualized approach to teaching and learning. Providing students with multiple ways to express themselves and engage with the material is essential for ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, can fully participate in the creative process. Additionally, creating a more inclusive curriculum that highlights diverse voices, including disabled artists, can help foster a sense of belonging and representation within the arts community.

Instructor training emerged as another critical area for improvement, with respondents calling for more widespread education on disability awareness and inclusive teaching practices. Faculty members must be equipped not only to provide accommodations but to foster a truly inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. As educators, they play a crucial role in shaping the arts education experience and should be proactive in addressing the unique challenges faced by disabled students.

Peer support and community-building were also emphasized, as respondents expressed the need for stronger connections among disabled students within the arts community. Creating spaces for students to collaborate, share experiences, and learn from one another can enhance the educational experience and help combat the isolation that some students may feel in traditional or virtual settings.

Flexibility in program design and structure was another key theme. Respondents appreciated the ability to engage with course content at their own pace, particularly in programs that allow for asynchronous learning. However, there was a call for more structure around group work and collaborative projects to ensure that disabled students can participate meaningfully in these activities.

Finally, institutional commitment to accessibility and inclusion must go beyond the individual classroom. While some programs have demonstrated a commitment to creating inclusive spaces, this needs to be institutionalized and sustained across all levels, from curriculum development to faculty training to administrative support.

Conclusion

Our findings highlight **the importance of continued advocacy**, **investment**, and **innovation in making arts education accessible to all.**

The feedback provided by survey participants underscored **the need for systemic change** in how arts education programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

By prioritizing inclusivity and ensuring that disabled students have the resources, support, and opportunities they need to thrive, we can create **a more equitable** and **vibrant arts education landscape in the United States.**

Acknowledgements

Contact

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