



Triple Play

Audience Perceptions of New Plays

Report to
Theatre Development Fund/Theatre Bay Area

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Foreword

Triple Play was born on a cold snowy day in Washington, D.C. at the *Scarcity to Abundance* convening hosted by Arena Stage. We were both there; the opening session was an interview of Rocco Landesman, conducted by Diane Ragsdale. This was the interview in which Rocco famously said that one of the problems with the not-for-profit theatre sector was that there were just too many theatres. We looked at each other and said: “No, the problem is there aren’t enough audience members. As Executive Directors of performing arts service organizations committed to building audiences, we are not doing our job.” Later in the weekend, two comments stood out for us. The first was an artist in the midst of a conversation about audiences who exclaimed, “We are always talking *about* audiences but we never talk *with* them!” The second was a presenter who in a conversation about programming and audiences said, “I always think of my audience. I am building a bridge to them from the art; I have to meet them where they are and bring them across.”

We got talking about what might happen if we put artists and audiences and theatre workers (both marketing and artistic folks) in direct conversation. Given the foci of our organizations, we were thinking about plays, not musicals, and new plays, not revivals. And so Triple Play was born. With support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, in fall 2013 we embarked on *Triple Play Phase I*. It modeled three-way conversations among playwrights, theatres, and audiences at theatres across the country to discover ways to help audiences have a more direct connection to new plays, give playwrights insights into the people for whom they write, and help theatres more deeply engage both sides of the equation.

After hosting conversations in six theatre communities across the country in which artistic and marketing directors shared their institution’s relationship with audiences we then partnered with nine theatre companies in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. and facilitated conversations with 70 infrequent new play single ticket buyers. Playwrights conducted one-on-one interviews with audience members while theatre staff observed. Marketing staff conducted focus groups with similar patrons, which were watched by playwrights. The interview protocol and focus group format were developed by WolfBrown, a bi-coastal consulting firm that specializes in nonprofit arts management. Information from the theatre community conversations and audience interviews became the foundation for a convening of *Phase I* participants, hosted by HowlRound, at Boston’s ArtsEmerson in January 2015. More than seventy playwrights, artists, and artistic and administrative leaders examined *Phase I* findings, discussed implications, and proposed next steps.

The clear message at the convening was “this is all very interesting and the findings are provocative but you have only talked to 70 audience members. The findings may not hold up if tested further.” So with the help of partners across the country we ramped up the research. In Phase 2, playwrights, theatre staffers and audience members engaged in almost 300 individual conversations. Following the live interviews, online surveys were sent to single ticket buyers from NNPN theaters and our partner theatres from the live conversations. We got 7,200 surveys back! The results are here in this report.

We are heartened by what we have learned and excited to share the findings with you. As you will see, audiences are passionate about going to the theatre. They enjoy having their assumptions challenged and seeing plays that provide a window into the larger world in which we all live. There are some consistent messages about ways in which we can increase the impact the work has on audiences and in so doing increase the likelihood that folks will come back time and again.

We look forward to hearing from you with your responses!

Tory Bailey and Brad Erickson



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Introduction

- Triple Play is a national research project led jointly by Theatre Development Fund and Theatre Bay Area to explore the interconnections between playwrights, audiences, and theatres. The project engages playwrights and theatre staff in conversations with audience members to increase our understanding of how audiences engage with new plays. In doing so, we explore what types of interaction with playwrights would deepen audiences' experiences with new work, strengthen their relationships with the playwrights, and connect them more deeply with the theatres that present new plays. The purpose of this research is to develop recommendations for new practices that would engage more people in the work of contemporary dramatists and open new plays up to larger audiences.
- In 2014, a pilot study tested an “action research” methodology that casts playwrights and theatre administrators in the role of researchers. Together, teams of dramatists and staff members at nine theatres conducted interviews and focus groups with audience members.
- Following the successful pilot, a second phase of Triple Play was initiated in 2016, which expanded the action research methodology to a wider range of cities, theatres, and playwrights, and also included a large-scale online survey of audience members.
 - A total of 289 one-one-one interviews with audience members were conducted in the fall of 2016 in seven cities across the US: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington DC.
 - The online survey was distributed to recent Single Ticket Buyers of 33 theatres across the US, yielding a total of 7,213 valid responses.
- Throughout the study there has been a focus on Single Ticket Buyers (STBs), as it is presumed that subscribers often attend new plays simply because they are part of the subscription package (rather than intentionally opting into the experience).
- The many partners who collaborated in this study and the decentralized approach to conducting interviews and recruiting survey participants generated a body of data that, to our knowledge, is unmatched in other audience research in terms of its breadth and depth. The data derived through interviews and surveys complement each other, allowing us to cross-reference results, test the wider applicability of individual statements, and contextualize responses within lived experiences.
- The national scope of this study and the depth of engagement with audience members could not have been accomplished without the support of several national and regional service organizations, including the National New Play Network, HowlRound, Playwrights Foundation, and the League of Chicago Theatres, as well as a number of individual theatres committed to the advancement of the field.
- This report synthesizes data from both the interviews and the survey, highlighting key findings for further discussion and exploration.



Takeaways & Discussion Points

Marketing

1. While relaxing, having fun, and spending time with friends and family are the most frequently cited motivations for going to the theatre, that doesn't mean STBs just want to tune out and escape from reality (p. 17).
 - 60% of all respondents also want to challenge their assumptions about the world and discover new plays and playwrights when they go to the theatre.
2. Most STBs want to know about the plot, style, and themes before seeing a new play (p. 34, 50). This helps them prepare and set expectations, and generally isn't perceived as a "spoiler."
 - The three-sentence synopsis or "blurb" was cited by many as the single most important source of information when making decisions about whether to see a new play.
3. When selecting a play to see, about one third of all STBs say they look up their favorite theatre companies to find out what's playing (p. 35).
 - This highlights the importance of brand and reputation.
4. The vast majority of audience members don't care whether a play is a premiere or not (p. 37). Moreover, most STBs don't distinguish between local and world premieres, and those that do are about evenly split between those who prefer local and those who prefer world premieres (p. 38).
 - For most STBs what matters is that a play is "new to them."
5. STBs who like challenging their assumptions, engaging with important issues in their communities, and taking aesthetic risks tend to be more interested in new plays (p. 64).
6. In interviews, many audience members expressed an interest in recommendations based on previous experiences, as in "if you liked this play, you'll love our next play."
 - Since there are wide discrepancies between the types of shows that audience members consider "risky," this may be the most promising approach to helping STBs identify new works that they are likely to enjoy.



Takeaways & Discussion Points

Engagement

1. People who are eager to discuss performances immediately after seeing them are more interested in all types of engagement activities, whereas those who prefer to reflect in private show little interest in engaging (p. 53). This raises an important question:
 - **How can theatres support those who prefer to reflect privately?**
2. People who are not generally fond of new plays want to be well-informed about what they're going to see before arriving at the theatre, but are generally less interested in engagement activities or additional information afterwards (p. 65).
3. STBs with high affinity for new plays need less information going into a new play but are more interested in vigorously discussing the work immediately after the performance (p. 67).
4. In terms of structured post-show engagement activities, STBs are most interested in receiving information directly from the playwright and/or talks-backs with the artists (p. 54).
5. Most STBs show little interest in engaging in the development of new plays. Some avoid plays that are still in development because they want a polished product, while others fear they might unduly influence the playwright's work (p. 44, 46).
 - **Perhaps the biggest challenge is the lack of knowledge about the new play development process among audience members, and uncertainty about how they can engage meaningfully without being experts.**



Takeaways & Discussion Points

Connection to Playwrights

1. Most STBs don't pay much attention to the authors of the plays they see (p. 57).
 - The playwright and the process of writing a play are mysteries, and for that reason they don't feel much of a connection.
2. Audience members who have a strong affinity for new plays are much more likely than occasional new-play goers to follow particular artists (p. 68).
 - By fostering closer and more personal connections to the generative artists, less frequent attenders might also be inspired to see new shows by their favorite artists. This argues for more "touchpoints" with playwrights.
3. The survey results suggest that greater access to playwrights would increase interest in seeing new plays (p. 58).
4. Theatres could foster audience connections with playwrights by promoting name recognition and connecting them with playwrights on social media. For instance, theatres might:
 - Inform audience members that a play they saw is being produced somewhere else, that the playwright won a prize, or that another work by the same playwright is being produced in the area (even if it's at a different theatre).
 - Promote a playwright's social media outlets (e.g., "Follow her online for commentary and creative responses to current affairs").
 - Share fragments of new dialogue or short videos of scenes still in development on social media.





Methodology



Interview Methodology

- Using the “action research” methodology that was piloted in 2014, Triple Play teamed up 63 playwrights with staff members from local theatre companies to conduct one-on-one interviews with audience members in seven cities across the US: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington DC.
- Interviewees were recruited by email from among the recent STBs of the participating theatres. Interested audience members were asked to complete an online screener survey, and interviewees were selected to represent a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. Theatre professionals, subscribers, and theatre-goers who already have a strong affinity for new work were generally not invited to participate, as we are particularly interested in “general” theatre audiences as opposed to theatre insiders or “new play buffs,” and we assume that subscribers often attend new plays simply because they are part of the subscription package (rather than out of any particular interest in the play).
- Interview participants received a \$50 Visa gift card in return for their participation.
- A total of 289 interviews were completed across the seven cities.
- The interviews provide a nuanced view of the range of experiences and relationships audience members have with new plays; however, one cannot assume that the sample is representative of individual theatre markets or the larger theatre-going public nationwide. The demographics of the interviewees (shown on the following page) reveal considerable differences between the samples in the various cities (e.g., interviewees were older in LA, included more Asian Americans in San Francisco, and included less people of color in Boston), and these distributions do not correspond to the demographics of the large-scale online survey that we conducted. Due to challenges in recruiting participants, over half of the interviewees in LA ended up being subscribers.
- While details of the interview schedule varied from site to site, they were generally conducted over the course of a few days (two weeks, at most) and were immediately followed by a meeting in which all playwrights and staff members who conducted the interviews exchanged their experiences and observations. Quotations from the debrief conversations appear throughout this report in green font, and it is important to note that these reflect interviewees recounting what they heard, even when they are articulated in the first person (i.e., from the audience member’s perspective).



Demographics of Interviewees, by City

| | Atlanta N=46 | Boston N=40 | Chicago N=38 | Los Angeles N=29 | New York N=45 | San Francisco N=44 | Washington, DC N=47 | TOTAL N=289 |
|---|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Gender | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 85% | 68% | 89% | 76% | 62% | 64% | 74% | 74% |
| Male | 15% | 33% | 11% | 24% | 36% | 32% | 26% | 25% |
| Transgender | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% | 0.3% |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| 18-24 | 0% | 0% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 4% | 2% |
| 25-34 | 11% | 23% | 11% | 3% | 22% | 7% | 28% | 16% |
| 35-44 | 15% | 18% | 5% | 3% | 24% | 16% | 17% | 15% |
| 45-54 | 33% | 15% | 34% | 14% | 20% | 20% | 26% | 24% |
| 55-64 | 26% | 20% | 29% | 41% | 16% | 25% | 23% | 25% |
| 65-74 | 13% | 20% | 18% | 28% | 11% | 20% | 0% | 15% |
| 75+ | 0% | 0% | 0% | 7% | 2% | 7% | 0% | 2% |
| Race/Ethnicity (multiple select; does not add to 100%) | | | | | | | | |
| White/Caucasian | 65% | 85% | 61% | 76% | 47% | 55% | 38% | 60% |
| African American or Black | 26% | 3% | 24% | 10% | 33% | 9% | 40% | 22% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 2% | 5% | 5% | 3% | 2% | 5% | 2% | 3% |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 4% | 8% | 5% | 7% | 7% | 30% | 13% | 11% |
| Native American or Alaska Native | 0% | 0% | 0% | 7% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Multi-racial | 2% | 3% | 5% | 7% | 7% | 7% | 4% | 5% |
| People of Color (sum of all non-white) | 35% | 18% | 39% | 34% | 49% | 50% | 60% | 42% |
| Subscriber Status | | | | | | | | |
| Single Ticket Buyer | 100% | 100% | 89% | 41% | 98% | 98% | 100% | 92% |
| Subscriber | 0% | 0% | 0% | 59% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 6% |
| Theatre Attendance (per year) | | | | | | | | |
| Less than once | 4% | 0% | 8% | 0% | 2% | 9% | 6% | 4% |
| 1 or 2 times | 54% | 43% | 42% | 10% | 18% | 23% | 66% | 38% |
| 3 to 5 times | 41% | 58% | 39% | 34% | 62% | 45% | 28% | 44% |
| 6 to 9 times | 0% | | 11% | 52% | 16% | 20% | 0% | 12% |
| 10 or more times | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 0.3% |



Survey Methodology

- While interviews provide an extremely deep and rich source of data, it is challenging to aggregate that amount of qualitative information and it remains questionable whether the results are representative of individual theatre markets or the larger theatre-going public nationwide.
- For that reason, an online survey of STBs was developed to complement the interviews, exploring many of the same issues quantitatively. The survey was fielded incrementally between December 2016 and April 2017, based on the availability of participating theatres.
- All in all, 26 theatres in the National New Play Network (NNPN) and seven theatres that had participated in the interviews sent the survey to recent STBs. Theatre professionals, employees and board members of theatre companies, and students in graduate-level theatre training programs were disqualified from the survey through initial screening questions.
- Financial incentives for participating in the survey were not available at all participating theatres. Those that offered a financial incentive provided a chance to win a \$100 Visa gift card.
- A total of 7,213 valid responses were received.
- Even when financial incentives are offered, online surveys of this sort suffer from self-selection bias. Participation is often driven by the respondents' sense of loyalty to a particular organization. This comes in addition to various well-established biases resulting from higher propensities among women and whites to collaborate with surveys. The results have not been weighted to correct for biases, since the size and demographics of the surveyed theatre markets are unknown.
- The participating theatres have agreed to share their survey data with each other through an online data dashboard, which allows them to compare their results to national and regional aggregates, and to their peers across the country.
- Due to the large number of survey participants, all results presented in this report are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$ for all correlations, comparisons of means, and regressions).



Survey Responses, by Theatre/Market

Atlanta

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Actor's Express (Atlanta, GA) | 233 |
| Synchronicity Theatre (Atlanta, GA) | 70 |

Greater Boston

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Central Square Theater (Boston, MA) | 94 |
| Company One (Boston, MA) | 171 |
| New Repertory Theatre (Watertown, MA) | 214 |

Greater Chicago

| | |
|---|-----|
| Northlight Theatre (Skokie, IL) | 293 |
| Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Chicago, IL) | 404 |
| The House Theatre (Chicago, IL) | 205 |
| The Hypocrites (Chicago, IL) | 161 |

Greater Los Angeles

| | |
|---|-----|
| Native Voices at the Atrium (Los Angeles, CA) | 151 |
| Rogue Machine Theatre (Los Angeles, CA) | 111 |
| Skylight Theatre Company (Los Angeles, CA) | 53 |
| South Coast Rep (Costa Mesa, CA) | 447 |

New York City

| | |
|--|-----|
| New York Theatre Workshop (New York, NY) | 194 |
| The Public Theater (New York, NY) | 494 |

Sacramento

| | |
|--|-----|
| B Street Theatre (Sacramento, CA) | 78 |
| Capital Stage Company (Sacramento, CA) | 132 |

San Diego

| | |
|--|-----|
| Diversions Theatre (San Diego, CA) | 385 |
| Moxie Theatre (San Diego, CA) | 59 |
| San Diego REPeratory Company (San Diego, CA) | 145 |

San Francisco Bay Area

| | |
|---|-----|
| Central Works (Berkeley, CA) | 115 |
| Marin Theatre Company (Mill Valley, CA) | 347 |

Washington, DC

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Arena Stage (Washington, DC) | 888 |
| Theater J (Washington, DC) | 217 |

Other Markets

| | |
|--|-----|
| City Theatre (Miami, FL) | 61 |
| Contemporary American Theater Festival (Shepherdstown, WV) | 275 |
| Curious Theatre Company (Denver, CO) | 217 |
| Florida Repertory Theatre (Fort Meyers, FL) | 350 |
| Geva Theatre Center (Rochester, NY) | 192 |
| Gloucester Stage Co. (Gloucester, MA) | 232 |
| Salt Lake Acting Company (Salt Lake City, UT) | 32 |
| Southern Rep Theatre (New Orleans, LA) | 53 |
| Unicorn Theatre (Kansas City, MO) | 140 |



Survey Demographics

| DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY | Number of Respondents | % of Sample |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|
| Gender, N=7105 | | |
| Female | 4777 | 67% |
| Male | 2289 | 32% |
| Transgender | 11 | 0.2% |
| Other | 28 | 0.4% |
| Age Cohorts, N=7080 | | |
| <18 | 5 | 0.1% |
| 18-24 | 147 | 2% |
| 25-34 | 545 | 8% |
| 35-44 | 637 | 9% |
| 45-54 | 1135 | 16% |
| 55-64 | 1913 | 27% |
| 65-74 | 1992 | 28% |
| 75+ | 706 | 10% |
| Race/Ethnicity (multiple select; does not add to 100%) N=7113 | | |
| White/Caucasian | 6184 | 87% |
| African American or Black | 374 | 5% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 277 | 4% |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 233 | 3% |
| Native American or Alaska Native | 102 | 1% |
| Other | 112 | 2% |
| People of Color (sum of all non-white) | 1098 | 15% |



Survey Demographics (cont.)

| DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY | Number of Respondents | % of Sample |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|
| Education, N=7170 | | |
| Less than 9th grade | 3 | 0% |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma | 16 | 0% |
| High school graduate or G.E.D. | 86 | 1% |
| Some college, no degree | 551 | 8% |
| Associate degree | 249 | 3% |
| Bachelor's degree | 2258 | 31% |
| Graduate or professional degree | 4007 | 56% |
| Theatre Attendance in Past Year (Stage Plays), N=7175 | | |
| 0 | 277 | 4% |
| 1 or 2 | 1749 | 24% |
| 3 to 5 | 2493 | 35% |
| 6 to 10 | 1520 | 21% |
| more than 10 | 1136 | 16% |
| New Play Attendance in Past Year, N=7192 | | |
| 0 | 1408 | 20% |
| 1 or 2 | 3489 | 49% |
| 3 to 5 | 1587 | 22% |
| 6 to 10 | 442 | 6% |
| more than 10 | 266 | 4% |





Motivations for Attending



Why do STBs go to the theatre?

- To get a sense of the participants' general theatre-going habits, the interviews opened with several questions about the theatres they go to and the types of performances they enjoy, which also shed light on their motivations for attending.

“A lot of people just wanted to hear a good story on stage. ... They're like, ‘I just want good dialogue, good characters.’”
Los Angeles

“[The interviewees] weren't interested in social issues. They weren't interested in current issues. They wanted to go to the theater as a kind of escapism rather than being confronted and challenged with those kinds of things.”
Chicago

“They were really wanting to see things they hadn't seen before and experience different things. They weren't interested in seeing the same plays over and over, and they weren't interested in just one point of view.”
Los Angeles

“In general, ... they wanted it to be tried and tested and seen somewhere else.”
Washington DC

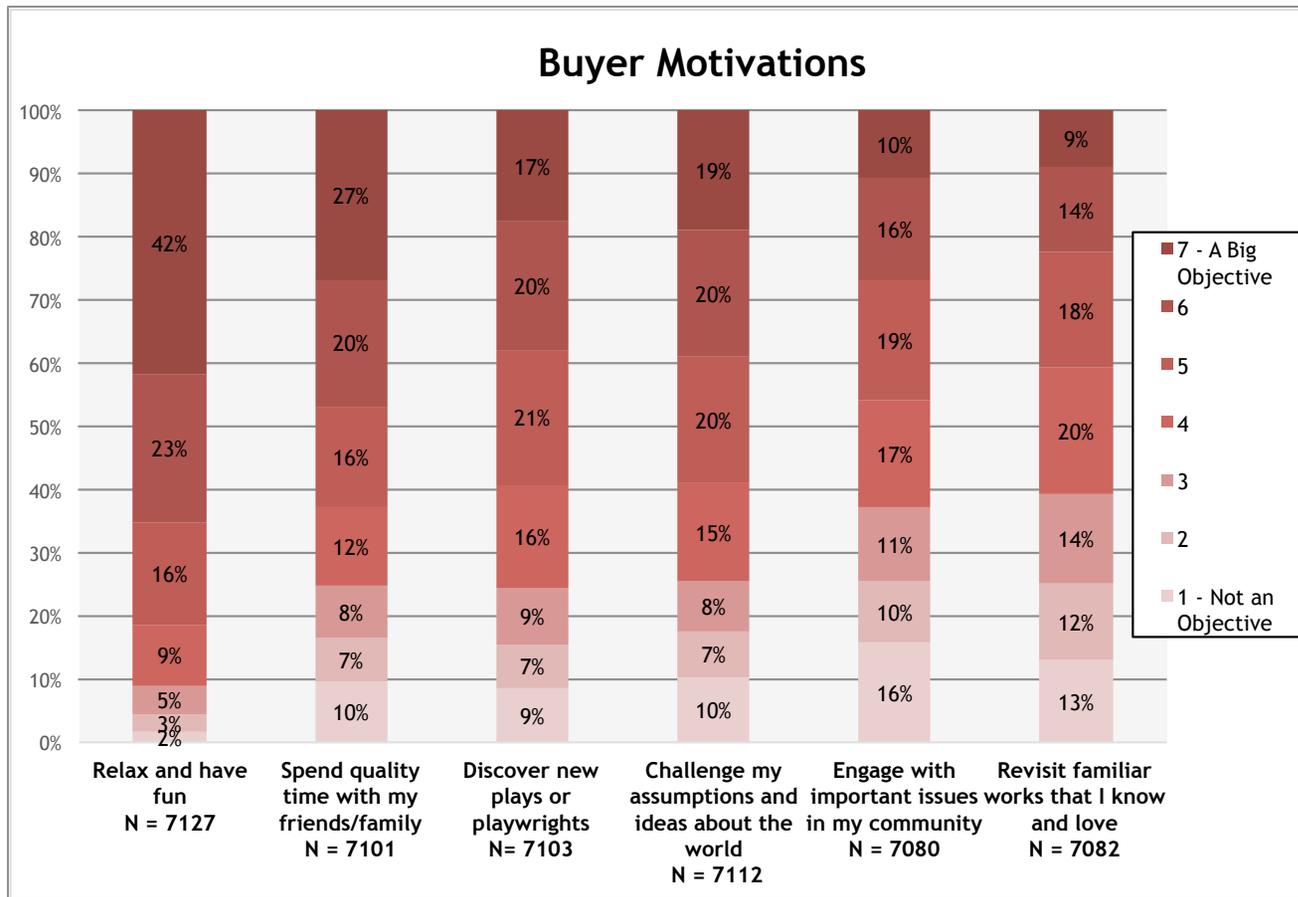
“They were very political and social justice oriented and not interested in big names. He wouldn't go see *Rent* or anything like that ... He said specifically, ‘I want to see amateur artists because I feel like I have more of a connection with them.’”
San Francisco

“The theater outing is primarily a social event... it was so much more about spending time with people and doing something special as opposed to experiencing the art object itself.”
Chicago

- The survey inquired more specifically what audience members hope to get out of an evening at the theatre, and asked respondents to rate six common motivations on a scale from 1 to 7.



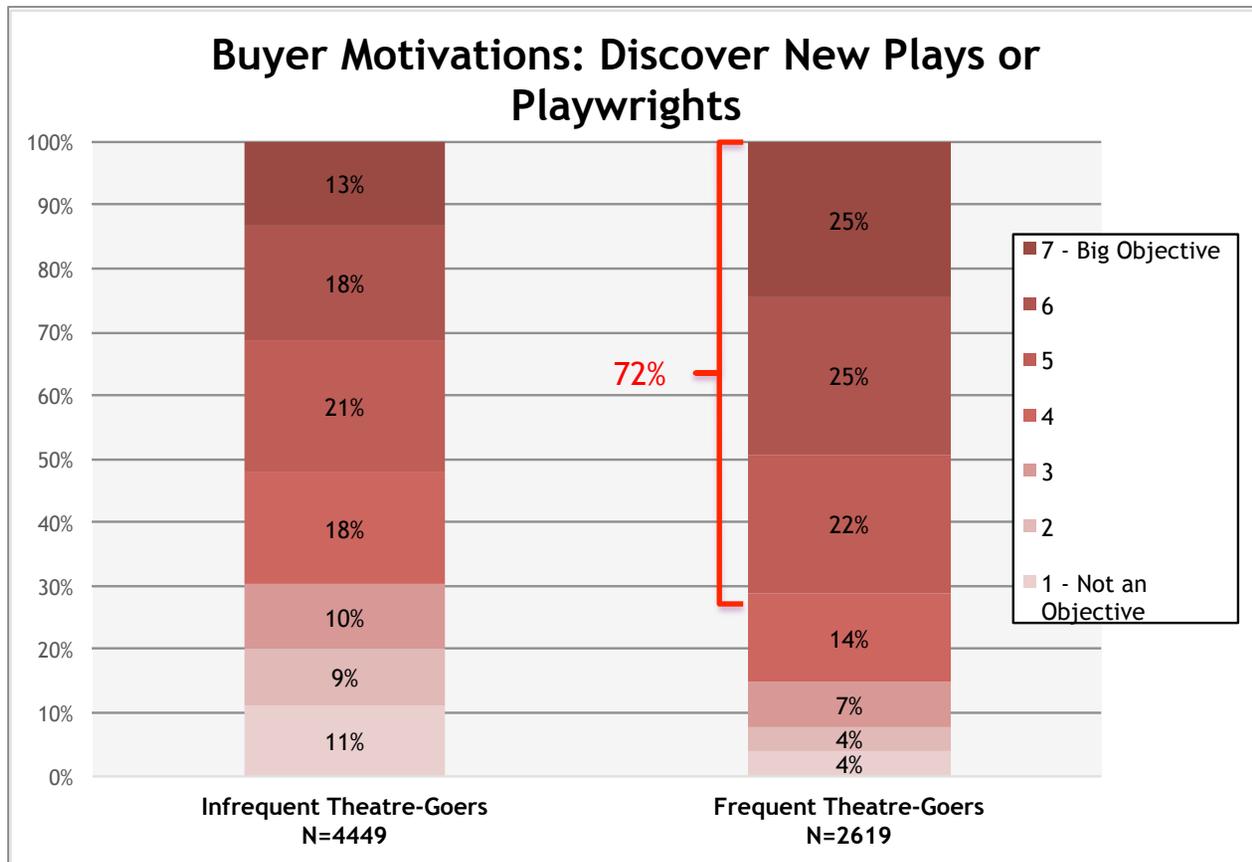
STBs like to relax, have fun, and spend time with their loved ones, but that doesn't mean they just want to “tune out”.



- While “relaxing and having fun” and “spending time with friends and family” are the most highly rated reasons for going to the theatre, 60% of all survey respondents also assign scores over 4 to discovering new plays/ playwrights and challenging their assumptions.
- Moreover, there are notable differences between STBs based on their frequency of attendance, as shown in the charts on the following pages.



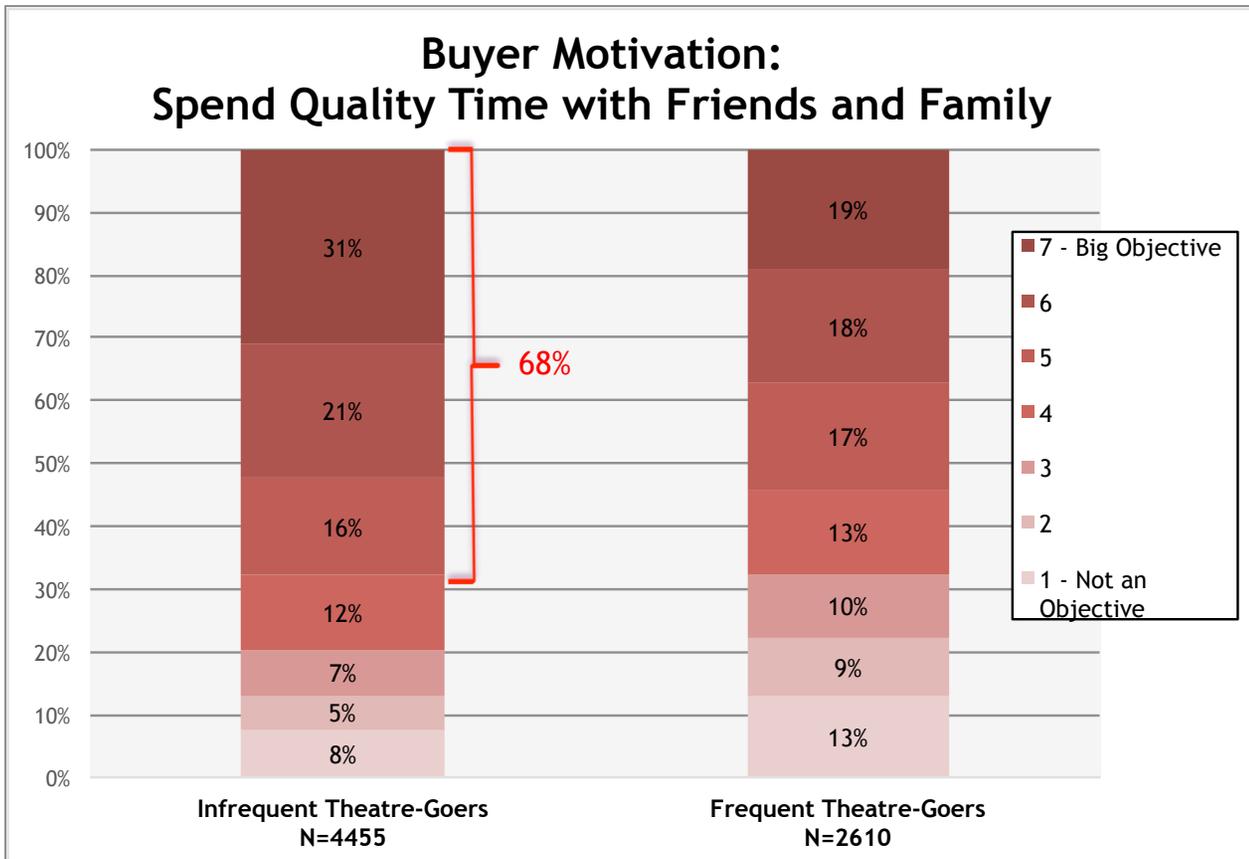
72% of frequent theatre-goers cite “discovering new plays or playwrights” as a motivation.



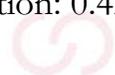
- 25% of frequent theatre-goers (i.e., those who saw more than five shows in the past year) view discovering new playwrights as a major objective (Score: 7).
 - Among frequent theatre-goers more people assign the top score to discovering plays/playwrights than to spending time with friends and family.
- About half of the less frequent attenders are also interested in discovering new playwrights (scores over 4), but only 13% see it as a big objective (7).

Infrequent attenders are more likely to see theatre-going primarily as a social activity.

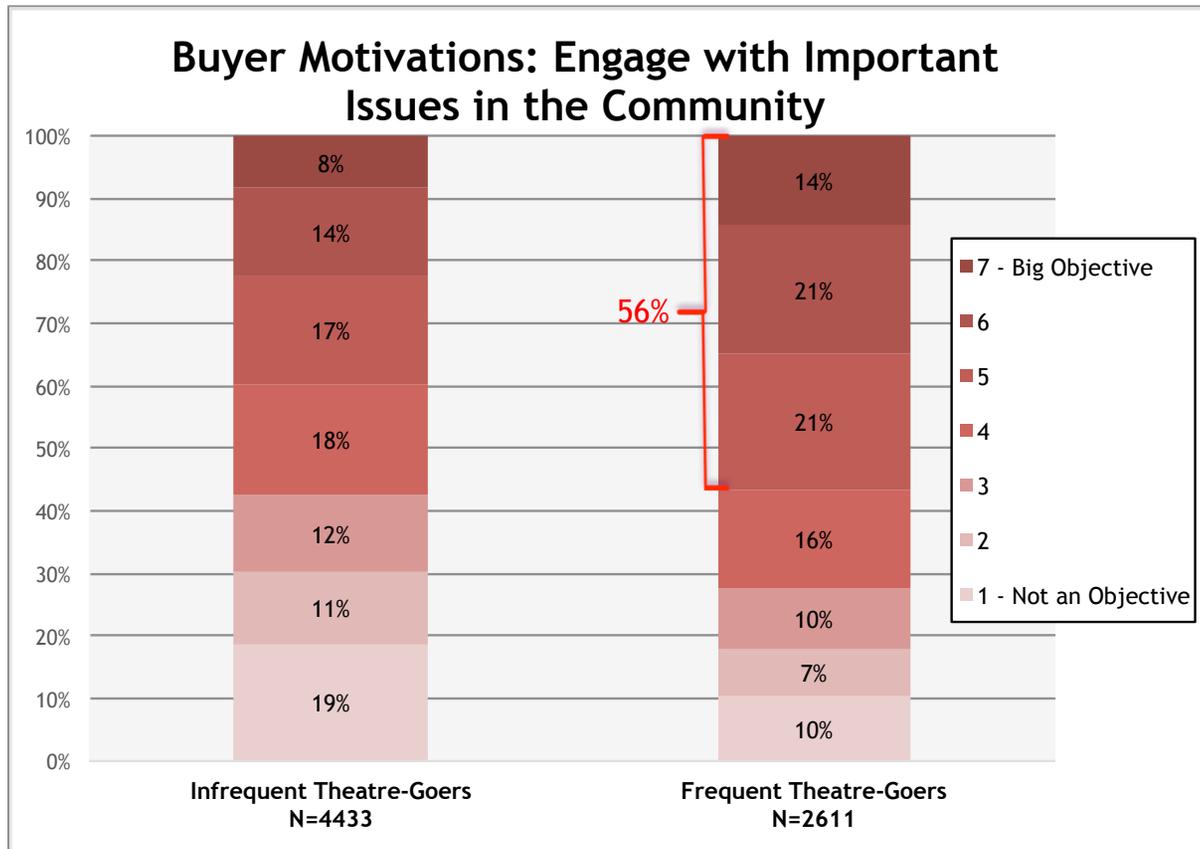
“The artist behind the play was far less important than the people they experienced the play with.” Chicago



- The social aspects of attendance are important to both frequent and infrequent theatre-goers.
 - “7” is the most frequently selected score in both groups.
- However, the emphasis on socialization is clearly higher among infrequent attenders. Of the respondents who went to the theatre less than 6 times in past year, 68% scored “spending quality time with friends or family members” above 4 (compared to 54% for more frequent attenders).
- Overall, those who go to the theatre to spend quality times with friends and family are also likely to cite relaxing and having fun as a motivation (Correlation: 0.42).



Frequent theatre-goers are more interested in community affairs.

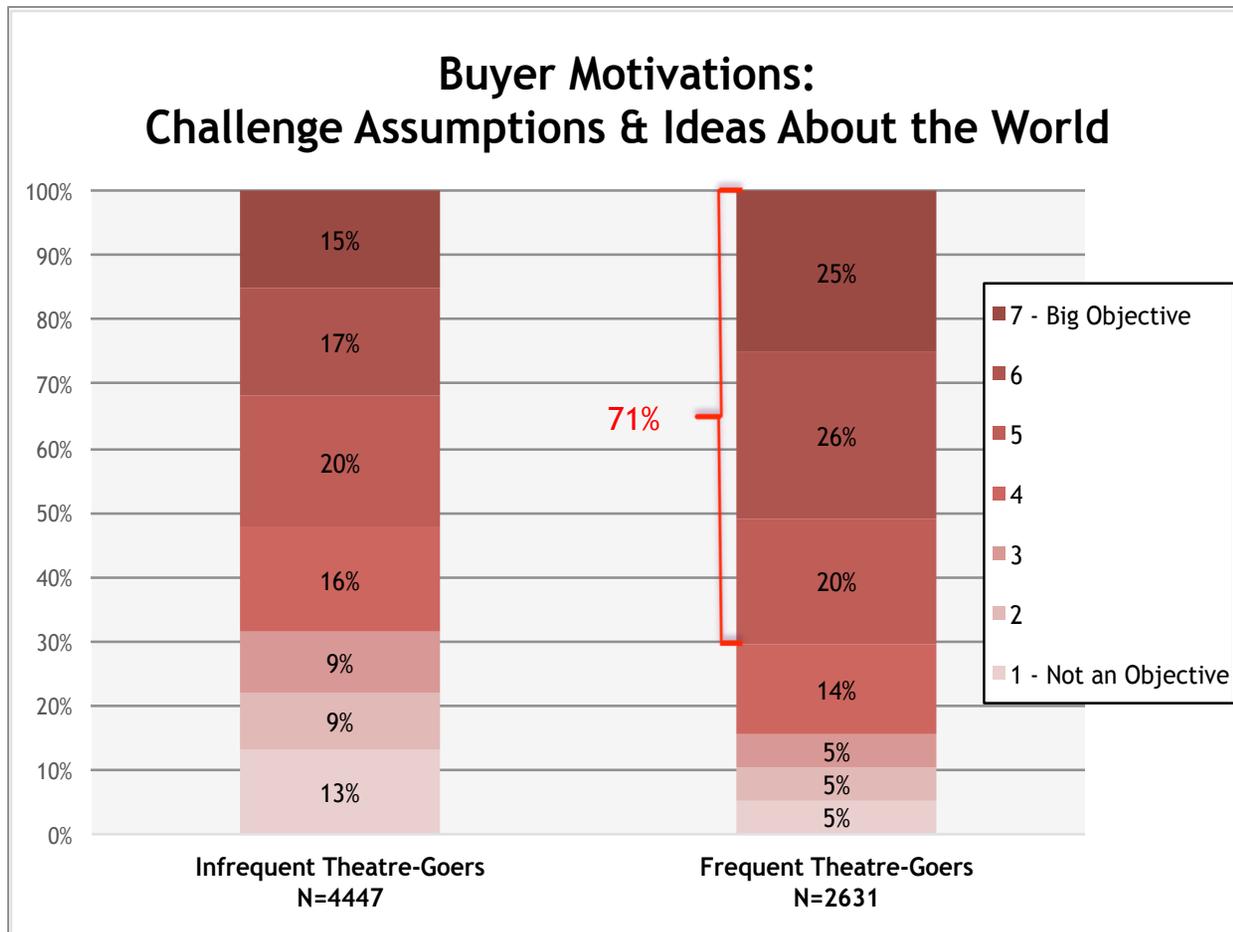


“Our group, interestingly enough, was not interested in plot ... They were more drawn to the theme.”

Chicago

- While less prominent than other motivating factors, more than half (56%) of the frequent theatre attendees express at least a mild interest in engaging with important issues in their communities.
- Meanwhile, among infrequent theatre-goers more respondents assigned scores below the midpoint (4) than above, with 19% selecting the lowest score.
- The desire to engage with important issues in the community is positively correlated with the desire to challenge one’s assumption and ideas about the world (0.62) and to a lesser extent also with the desire to discover new plays and playwrights (0.37).

Frequent theatre-goers seek challenge and are open to unfamiliar perspectives.



- Over 70% of frequent theatre-goers want to be challenged intellectually, with a full quarter assigning the top score of 7.
 - Among frequent theatre-goers more people assigned the top score to “challenging their assumptions and ideas about the world” than to socializing with friends and family.
- In addition to having a strong correlation with with the desire to engage with community issues (see previous page), there is a positive association with the desire to discover new playwrights (0.39), and an *negative* association with wanting to relax and have fun at the theatre (-0.14) That means that higher scores on challenging one’s assumptions tend to be associated with lower scores on wanting to relax and have fun.

Interviewers found it difficult to interpret audience members' self-reported interest in being challenged: What's challenging to one person may not be to another.

- “You want to be a person who likes challenges, right? ... A couple of people were like, oh, yeah, I like challenges, but ... the plays ... they saw, I did not think were very challenging.”

Los Angeles

- “When I asked ... about challenging work they all interpreted that as something that challenges their ideas. They said, ‘Yeah, I want to be challenged, I want to think, I want it to be emotionally challenging.’ ... [But] they were not interested in being challenged if it meant they had to put energy towards understanding what was happening.”

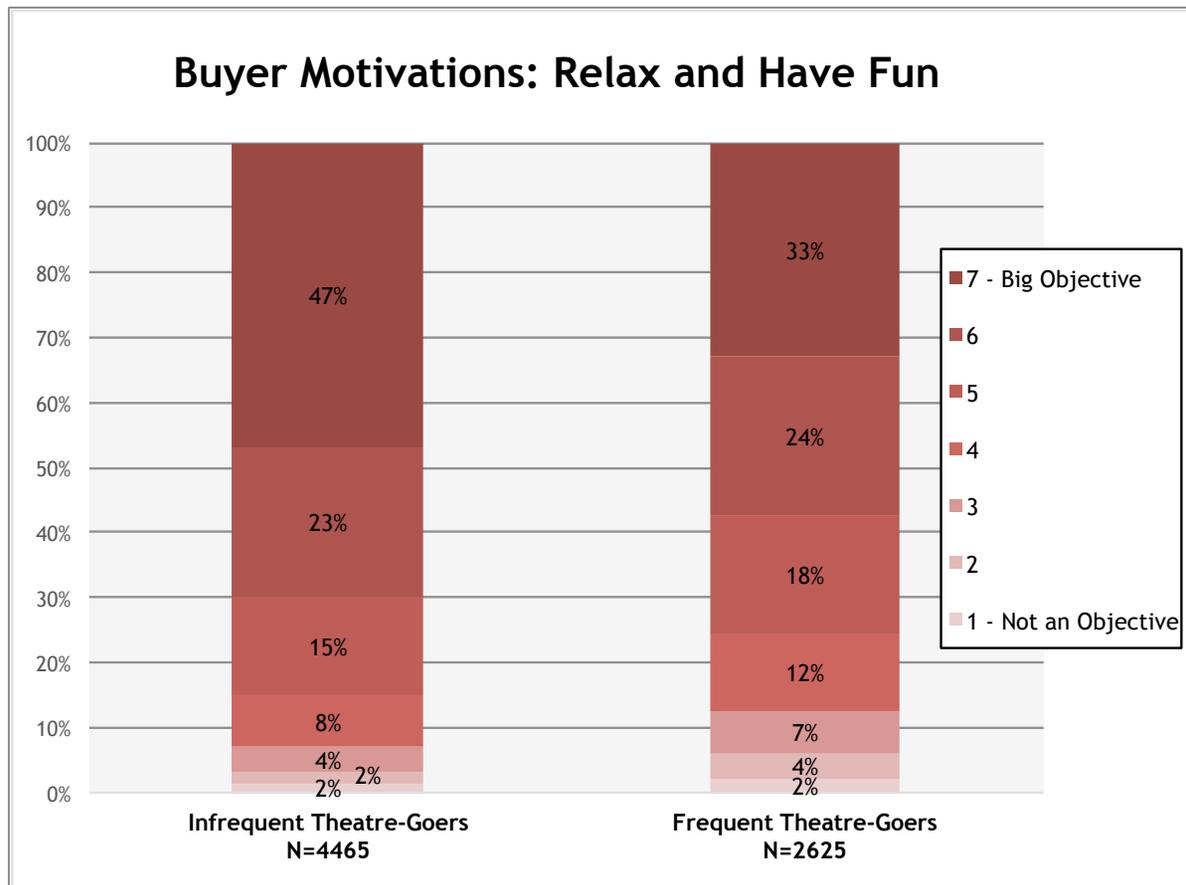
San Francisco

- “When we asked her about challenging productions she mentioned *Book of Mormon* being challenging. So that's the level of challenge that she was up for.”

Chicago



For both frequent and infrequent theatre-goers, relaxing and having fun is the most highly rated objective.

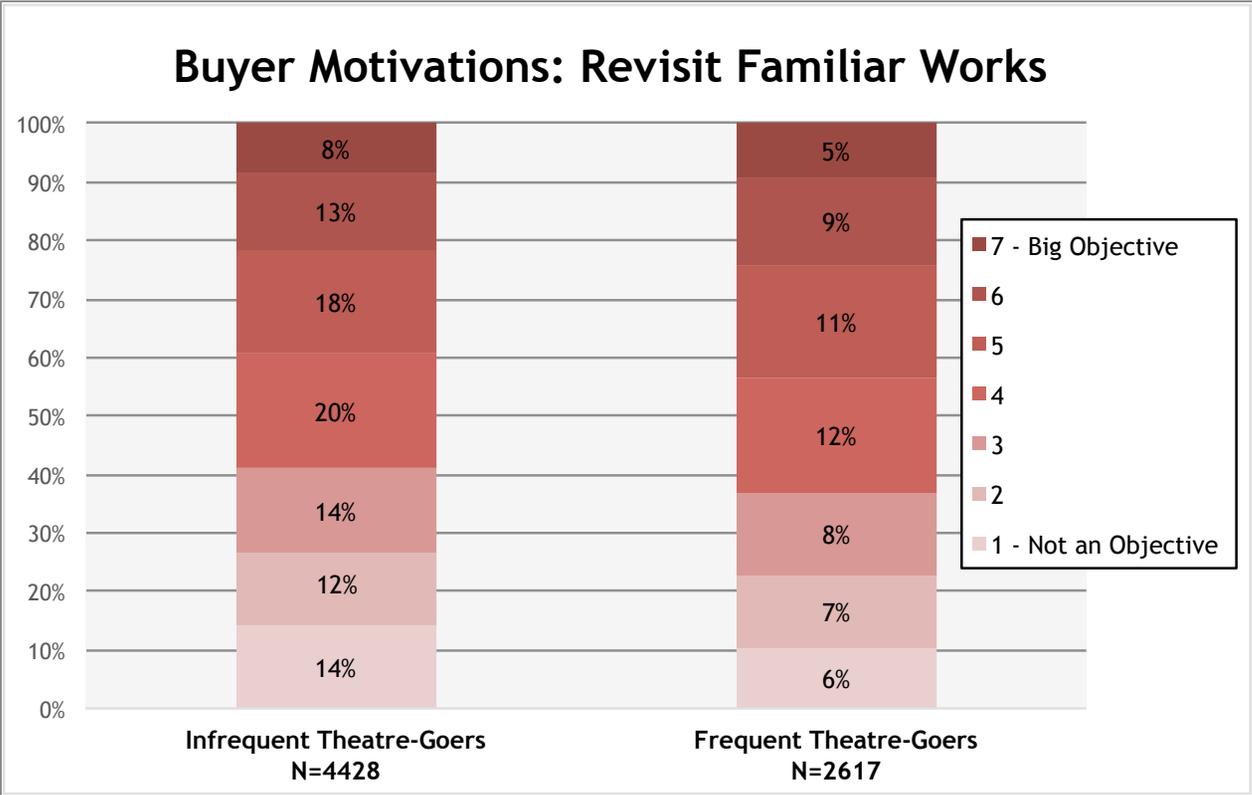


- However, the emphasis on fun and relaxation is more pronounced among infrequent theatre attendees, with almost half (47%) assigning the top score of 7.

“They’re fine with emotional challenges ... [but] they don’t go to the theater to be bummed out.”

Chicago

Both frequent and infrequent attenders are about equally distributed across the scale on revisiting familiar works.



- For both frequency groups, the most commonly selected rating is 4, with approximately equal numbers above and below.
- Of course, interest in revisiting familiar works does not necessarily preclude interest in seeing new works.



In the interviews, many people of color in particular cited the desire to see themselves reflected on stage as a reason for seeing plays.

“Every single person of color we talked to, very explicitly said, ‘I look for diversity. I look for people who look like me. I look for themes about race and social justice.’”
Los Angeles

“[The] first gentleman that we spoke to said I’m Japanese American, so I look for plays with Asian themes by Asian writers and...those are the plays that I will select first and foremost.”
New York

“Particularly the two women of color talked explicitly about wanting to see their experiences reflected on the stage. One of the women—it was sort of implied just in the playwrights and the plays that she cited. Another one said explicitly, ‘You know, I want to see plays that deal with being African-American.’”
Washington DC

“One guy (late 20s, African American) said yeah I look for plays about the African American experience. Are people of color in the cast? He said, ‘I might be less likely [to go] if there’s all white characters’... but he wasn’t exclusive about it either, if there was something else engaging him.”
New York

“Sometimes the theater company might be doing something that was ethnically centered, and even if they might disagree with that playwright or [the play] they were doing, they would still go to support that particular work.”
Chicago



After the interviews in Los Angeles, race and representation in the theatre—both on and offstage—became a focus of the conversation among playwrights and staff members who conducted the interviews.

- Since the results were not replicated in the survey, it is unclear whether they are nationally representative from a statistical perspective, but the conversation was so rich and important that some observations are shared here:

“Older white theatergoers generally [want] a good premise, a good story. The younger people of color put these social themes and social issues and social justice issues first, even before the actual story.”

“The older [white] women that we spoke to – neither one of them would say explicitly that they weren’t interested in seeing plays about, . . . people of color. But they both kind of made the point [that they] don’t want to feel guilty. ‘I don’t want the playwright to have an axe to grind.’ And the examples that they would bring up would be plays by people of color.”

“Our millennial [interviewee] made a good point about seeing those people in the audience as well as on the stage . . . You can have a beautifully diverse cast on the stage, but if I’m a young black woman in the middle of 80 middle-aged white people, then I’m out.”

“It’s the whole [theatre] culture. It’s not the space. It’s the whole culture around the space . . . our whole [theatre] culture is geared to one culture. It’s not inclusive of *my* culture. My culture’s not welcome in your theatre.”

- While people of color are underrepresented in the survey responses—in part as a result of the demographics of the participating theatres, and in part, it seems, due to a lower response rate—race and ethnicity were not found to be statistically significant drivers of new play affinity in regression analyses.





Risk Factors



What is risky?

“They really don’t want to go into a place where they feel stupid. ... Any avenues for taking away that fear I think are really [worthwhile] with general audiences.”

Atlanta

“She basically said she doesn’t go to the theatre for it to be the ‘safe place.’ She goes there to be challenged. She thinks that’s what she’s signing up for.”

Chicago

“Several of them said the thought of being trapped in a seat – it’s much harder to leave a theatre than leave a movie theatre. There’s a lot of feeling trapped in theatres, being afraid of that.”

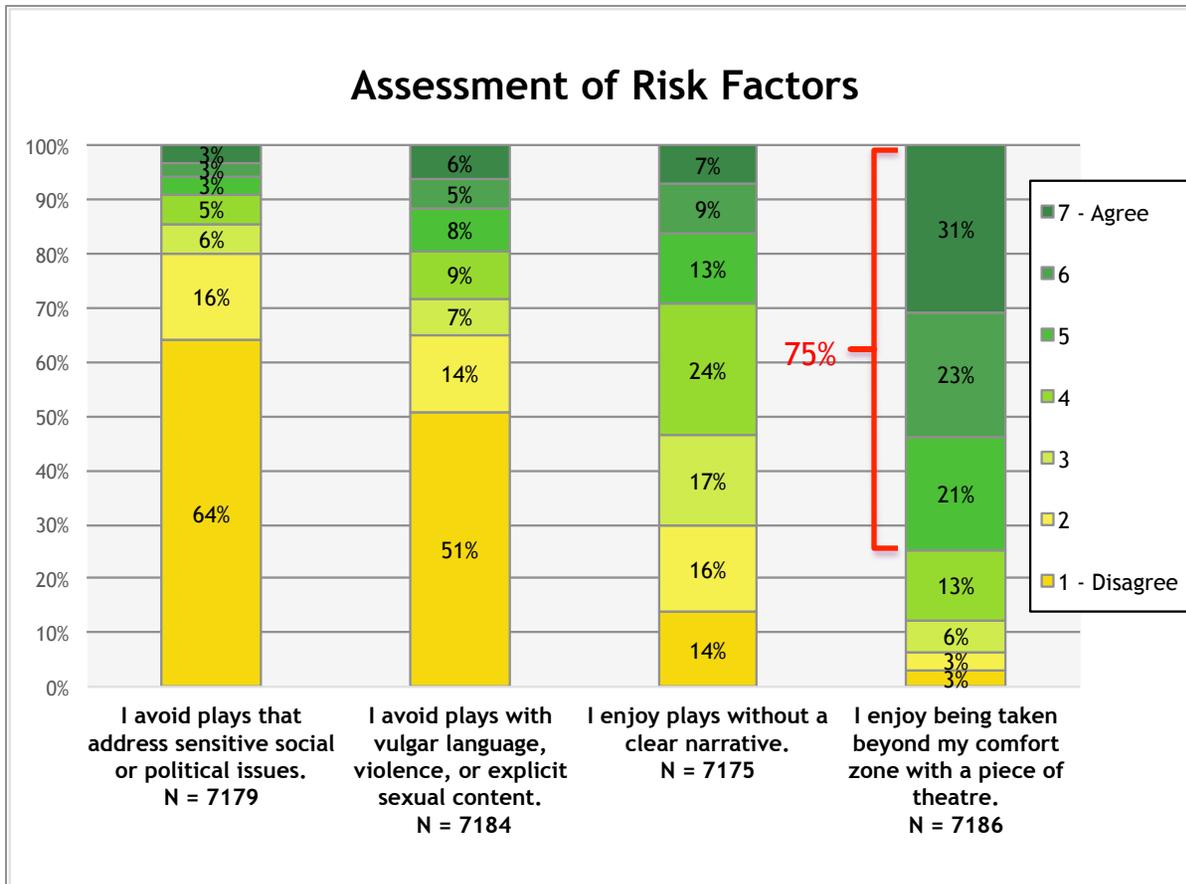
New York

“The people we were talking to wanted to be challenged sort of topically, intellectually, maybe even a little socio-politically, but not necessarily with form. They didn’t want to be bored, they didn’t want to have to work too hard to understand something. So ... ‘too challenging’ ... meant they got confused, or started to get tired. So it’s a different kind of challenging.”

San Francisco



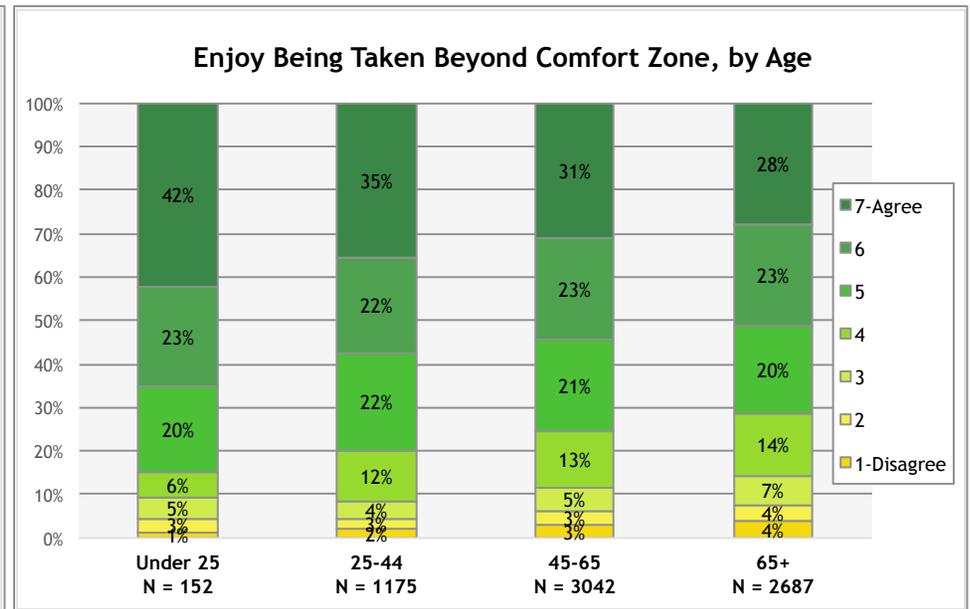
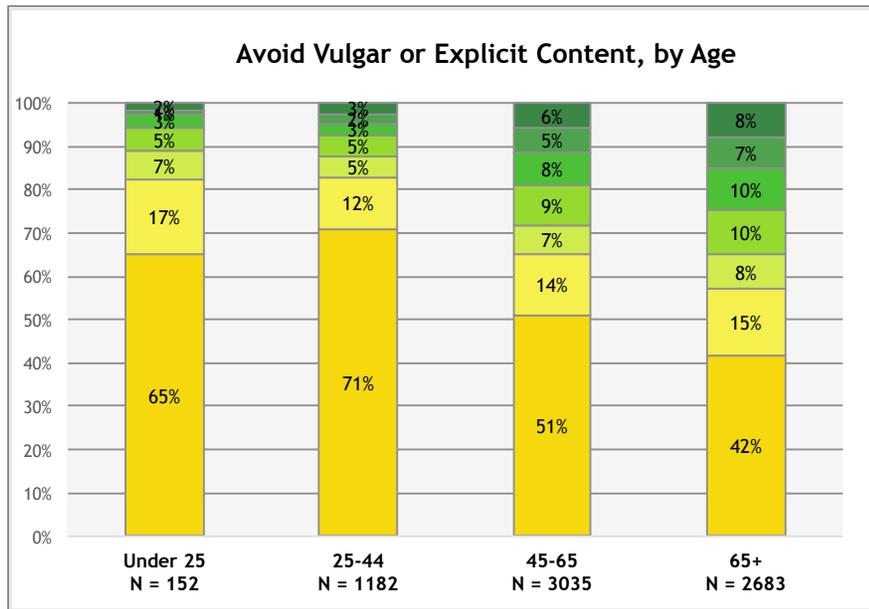
While there are some clear trends, STBs don't always agree on what characteristics of a play are off-putting.



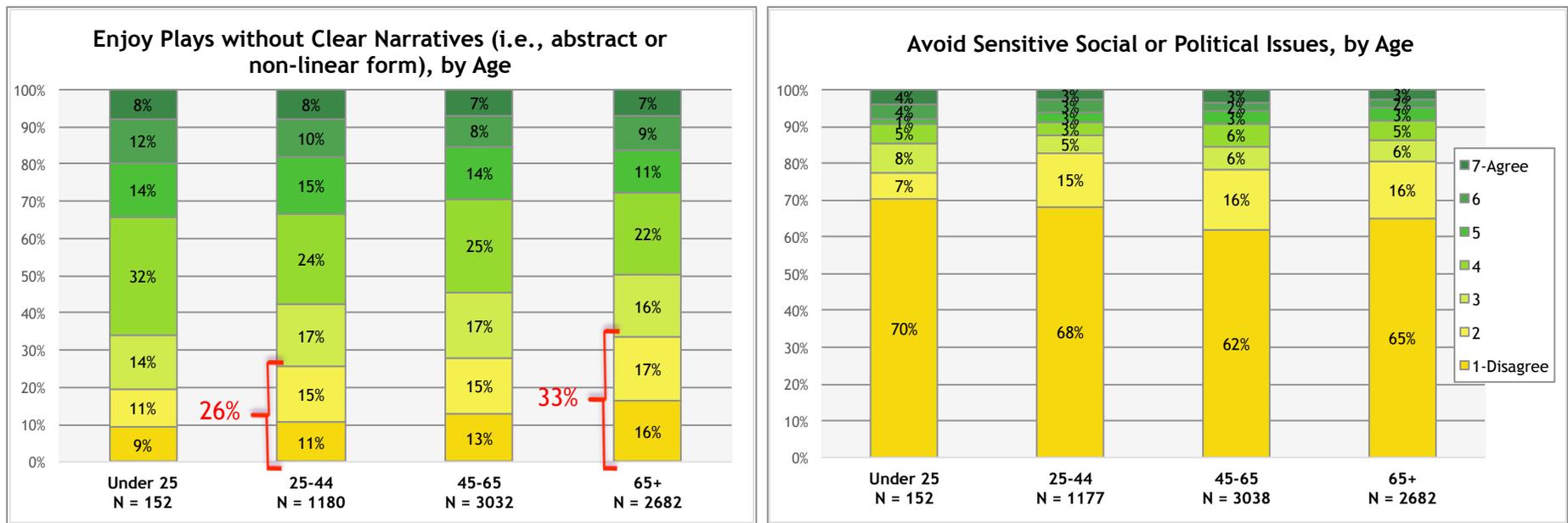
- The majority STBs are not at all deterred by plays that address sensitive social/political issues (64%) or plays with vulgar language, violence, or explicit sexual content (51%).
- Indeed, 75% expressed some level of pleasure in being taken beyond their comfort zone.
- However, STBs are split when it comes to non-linear or abstract plays without a clear narrative.
- The scores on sensitive political issues and being taken out of one's comfort zone substantiate the conclusion that STBs don't merely want to unwind and have fun (although that is the most highly rated individual motivation).



Overall, younger STBs are less easily offended by adult content and are slightly more likely than older STBs to enjoy being taken out of their comfort zone.



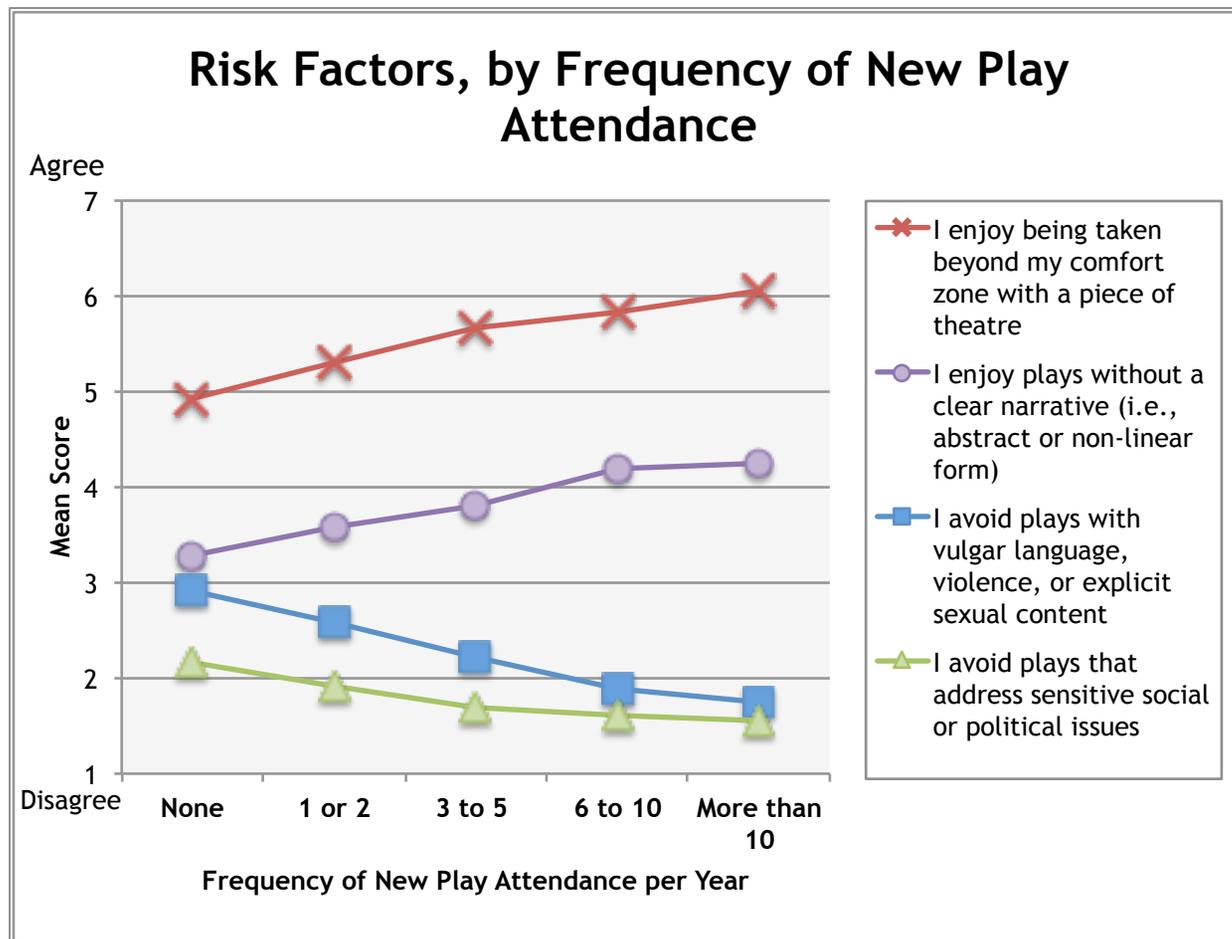
Older respondents are slightly less interested in non-linear plays, but audiences of all ages are open to social and political content.



- Overall, people who say they avoid vulgar or explicit content (previous slide) are also more likely to avoid plays that address sensitive social or political issues (correlation: 0.33), and they are less likely to enjoy being taken beyond their comfort zone (-0.33) or enjoy plays without a clear narrative (-0.16).



The risk factors are also clearly related to frequency of new play attendance: People who are risk averse attend new plays less often.





Decision Making & Perceptions of New Plays



How do STBs decide which plays to see?

“I want to know what the story is. That’s the only thing I care about. [It’s] pretty much the only determining factor, when I see a play.” Los Angeles

“Subject matter and story was by far ... the most important thing ... That’s the information that they looked for in mailers and on theatre websites.” Chicago

“Price and content were the primary decision drivers for everybody [I talked to].” New York

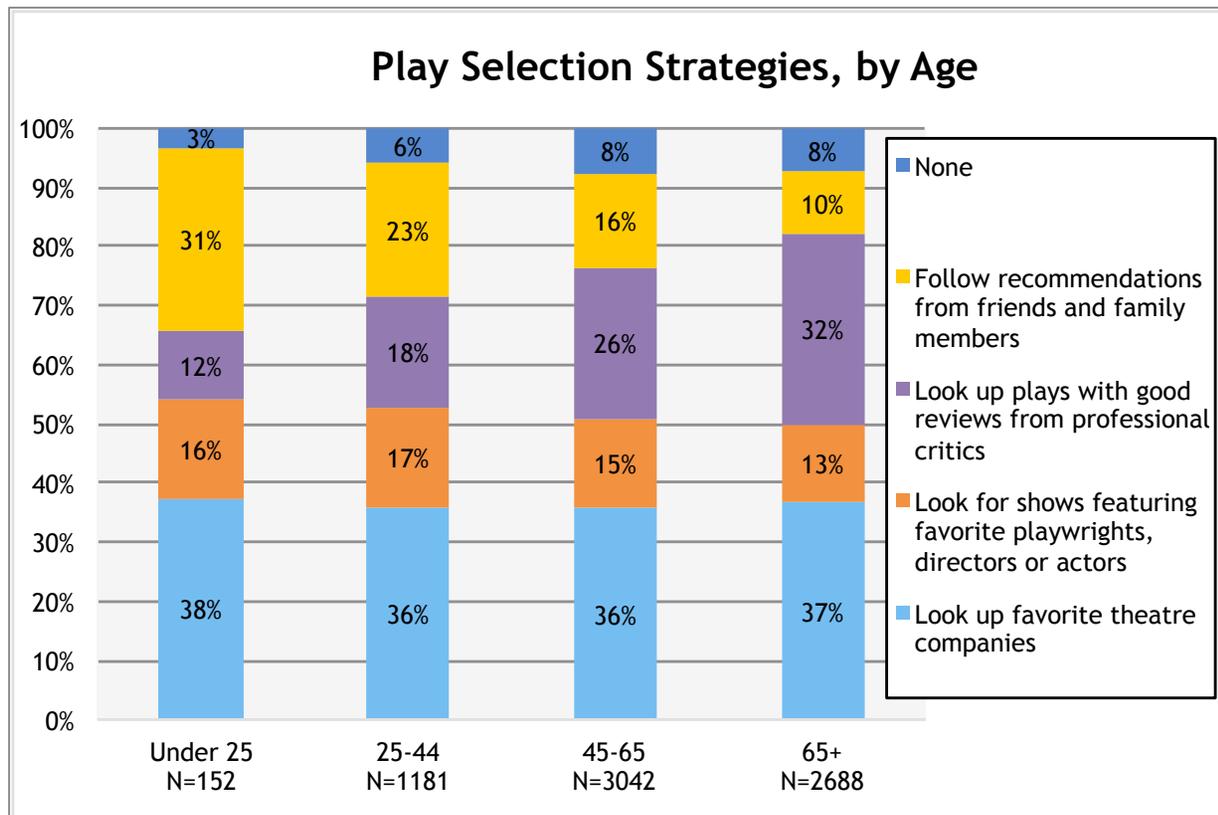
“Who they see plays with is very important and can influence their choice.” Chicago

“There was one guy who was—all he talked about was Woolly [Mammoth], and he was like, ‘I don’t care what it’s been, where it’s been, ... all that matters to me is that it’s a Woolly show.’” Washington DC

“We found that there were a lot of people in our group [of interviewees] who would follow a particular playwright.” New York



When selecting a play to see, about one third of all survey respondents say they look up their favorite theatre companies, highlighting the importance of brand and reputation.



- Parsing the data by age reveals that younger audiences are more likely to rely on recommendations from personal acquaintances (23% for under 45-year-olds) while older patrons are more likely to seek out reviews by professional critics (32%).
- This underscores a generational shift in media use.

How do STBs feel about new plays?

“They didn’t know what we meant by a new play. Do you mean ‘new to me?’ Do you mean a contemporary play?”
Los Angeles

“People defined new works as works that were new to them.”
Chicago

“‘Bragging rights’ is what we heard a lot, ... that you get to be the first to see the thing.”
Boston

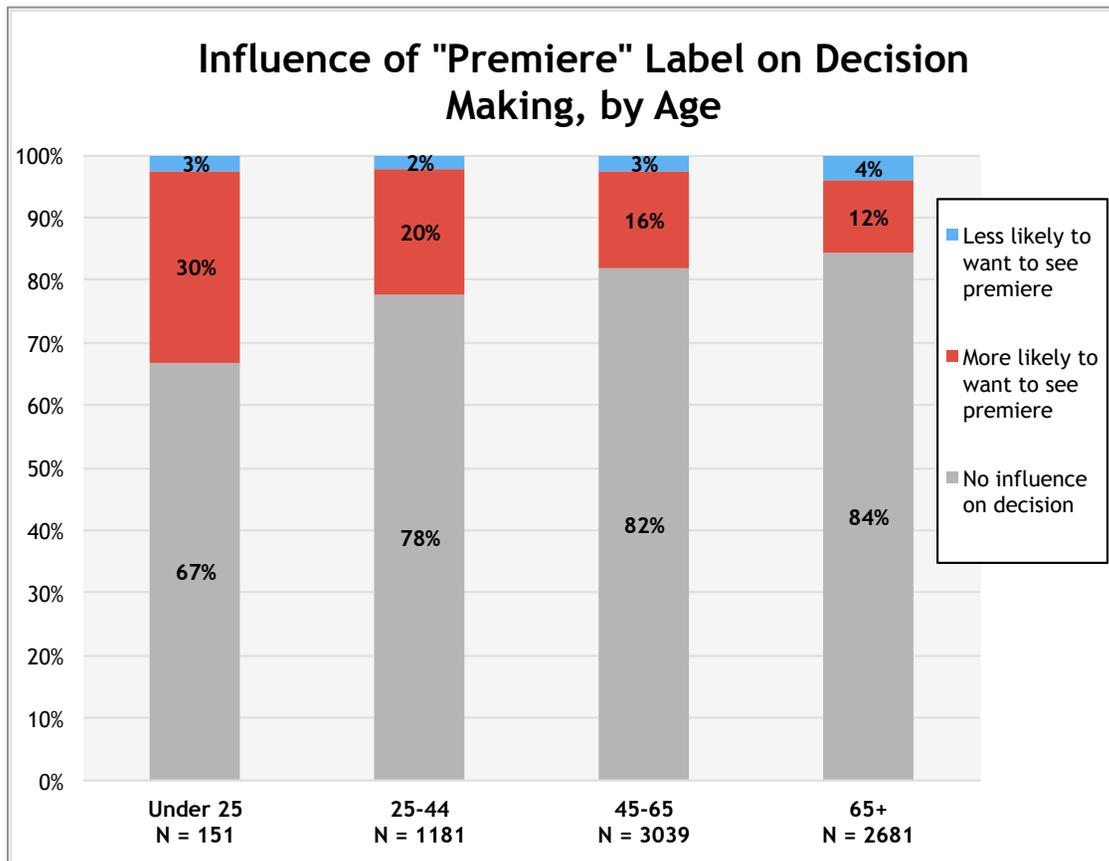
“He is risk-averse, I think, to something too new. He really would prefer something that has premiered somewhere else.”
San Francisco

“Almost everybody that I talked to was interested in being involved in the development of new work, and said that if they had some access in the development process they would be more likely to see a new play.”
Chicago

“I left the whole conversation thinking they don’t know what a new play is ... We have a real branding problem in new work development.”
San Francisco



Most STBs don't care whether a play is a premiere or not.

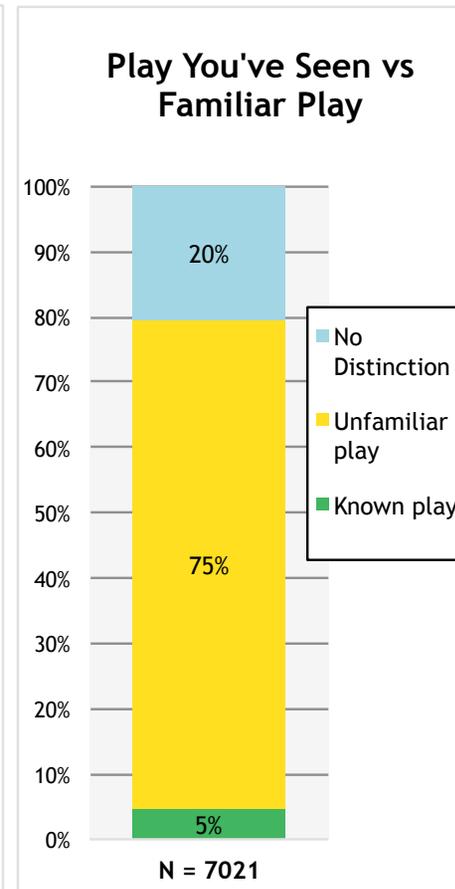
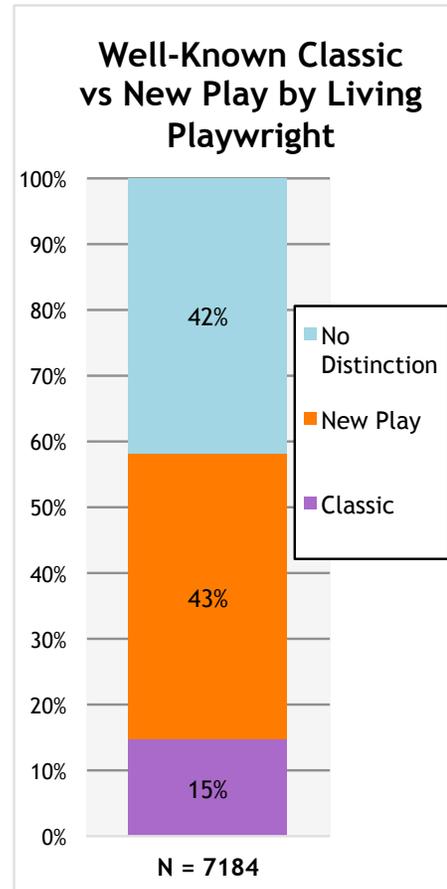
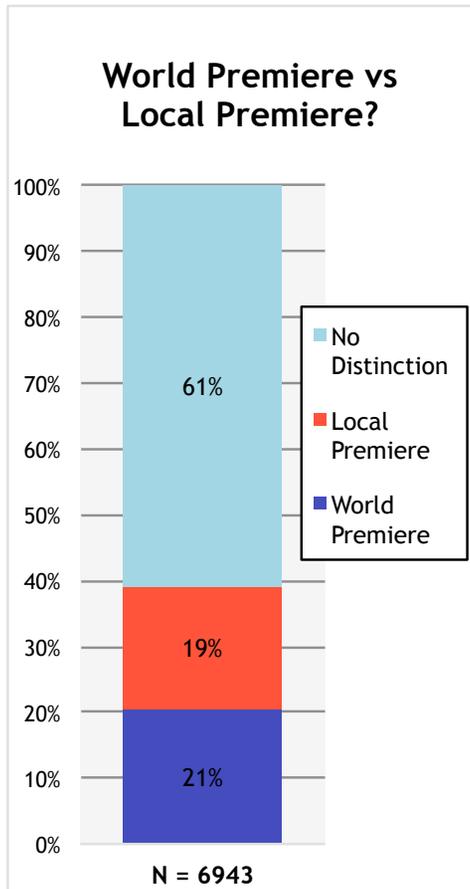


- The appeal of plays advertised as “premieres” decreases for older audiences. Whereas over 20% can be swayed by that designation in the younger cohorts (under 45), that figure drops to 12% for those over 65.

“Calling something [World Premiere] has no effect. They don't really care.”

Chicago

There are different ways of defining what a “new play” is. For most STBs what matters is that it is “new to them.”



- Unfamiliar plays are preferred over known plays and new plays over classics by wide margins.
- Most STBs (61%) don't distinguish between local and world premieres, and those that do are about evenly split between those who prefer local premieres and those who prefer world premieres.

“Most people didn't care if it was a new play or a Chicago premiere or world premiere. A lot of people didn't even really seem to know what the difference was.”

Chicago



The lack of differentiation between world premieres, regional premieres, and other contemporary work was also one of the most consistent observations in the interviews.

“The distinctions between world premiere, regional premier, local premier – [they had] no idea what any of that meant. New-to-them was a new play.”

San Francisco

“The idea that it had premiered somewhere else and had somehow had been deflowered by another city – nobody cared.”

Chicago

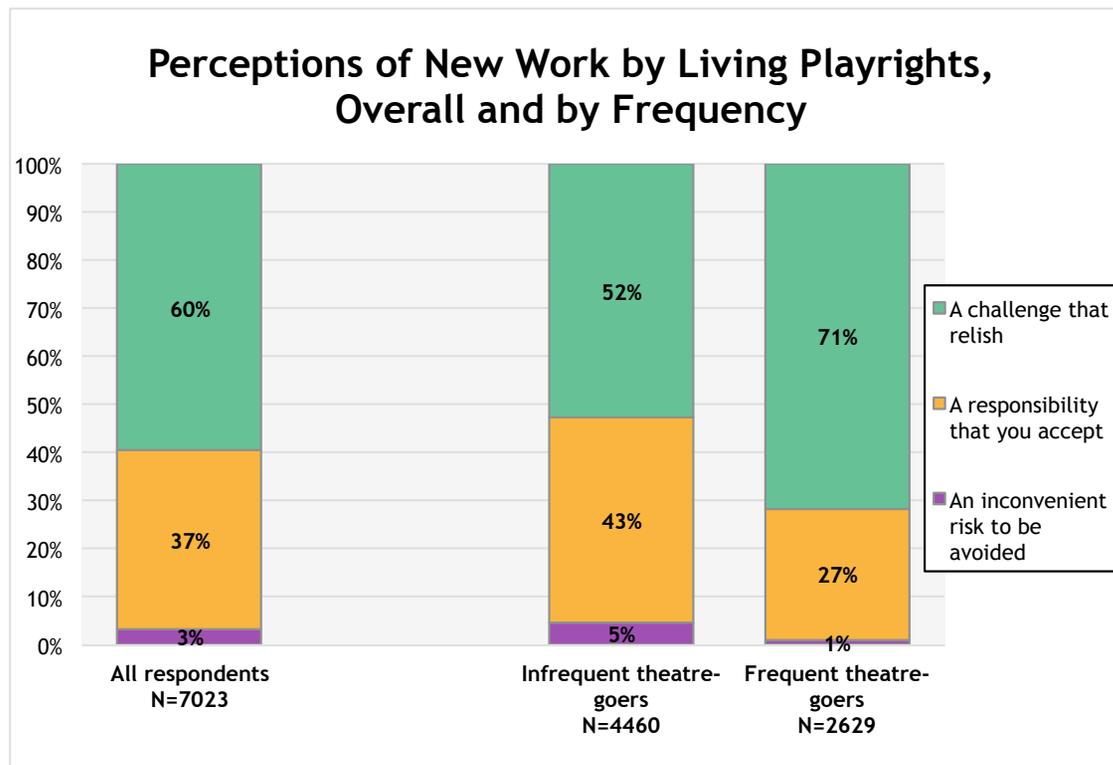
“If a play was new, that did not make them want to go see it. They were all about a play that had played in Boston or Chicago and was making its regional premiere—that was more exciting to them, because then it must be good—so it’s a safer bet.”

Washington DC

- Since the study focused on STBs, we cannot determine if premieres are important for subscribers or donors; however, there were several subscribers among the interviewees in Los Angeles, and like the STBs, they didn’t much care whether a play was a world premiere or not.

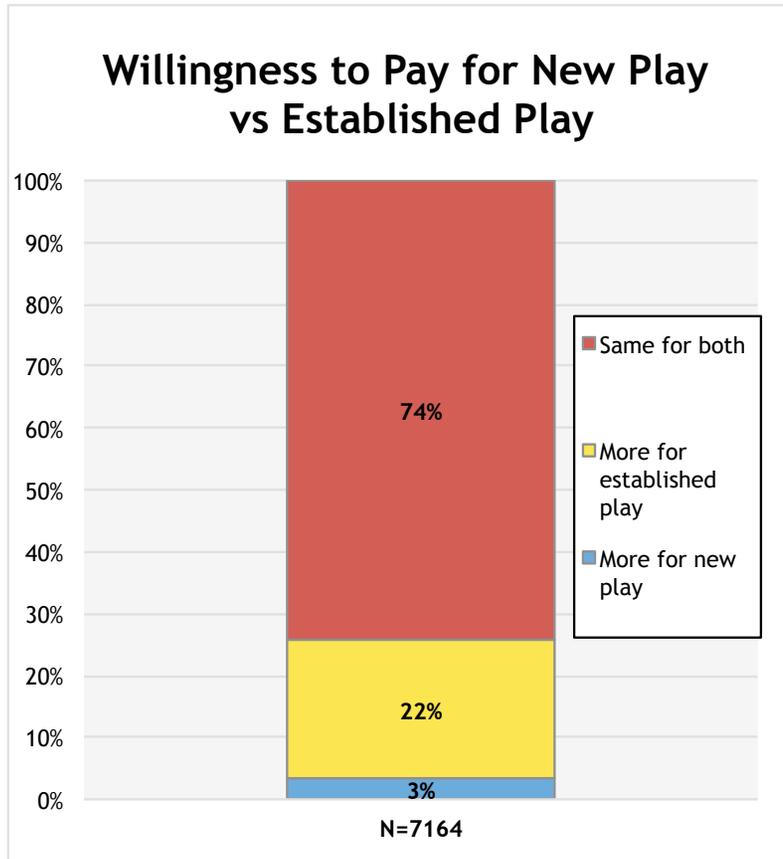


Overall, 60% of STBs see attending new plays by living playwrights as a challenge they relish.



- This sentiment is particularly strong among frequent ticket buyers (those who have seen more than five plays in the past year).
- About a third of all STBs see the work of new playwrights as a responsibility that they accept.
- Only 3% see it as something to be avoided.

Despite the apparent interest in new plays and discovering new playwrights, STBs are not willing to pay more for that experience.



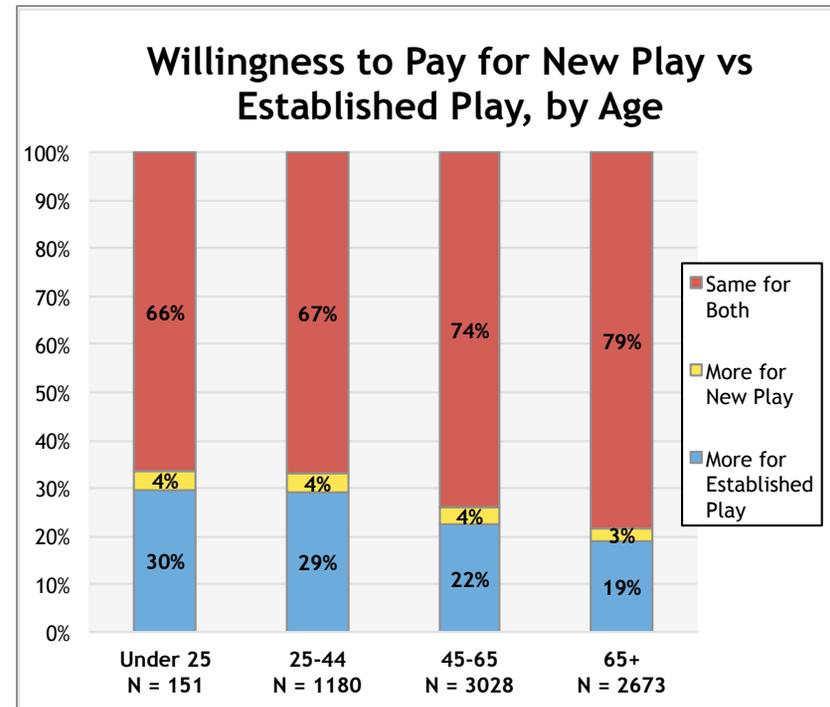
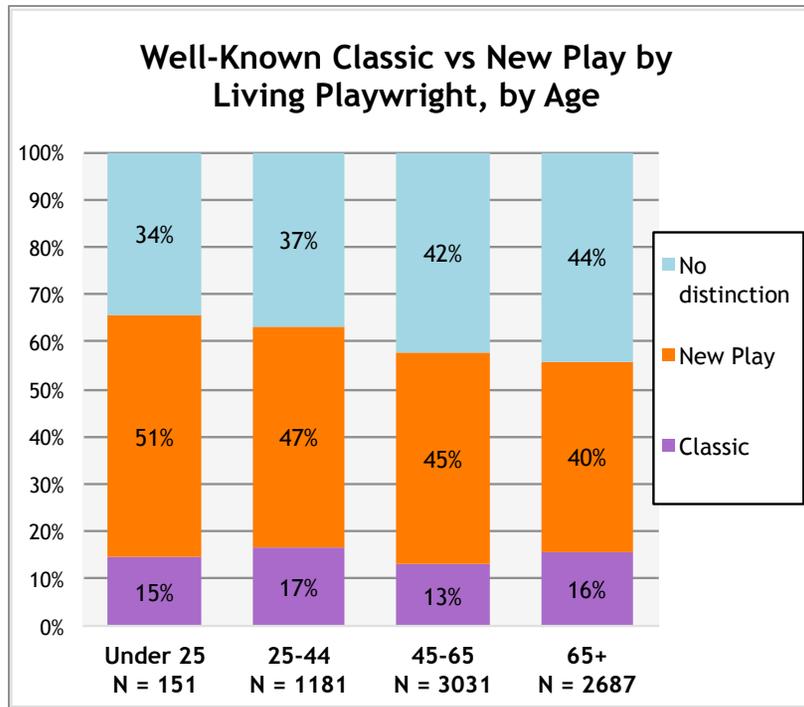
- Although 60% of all respondents say they relish the challenge of new work (previous page), only 3% are willing to pay more to see new plays.
- In fact, 22% state that they would pay more to see an established play.
 - This suggests that while patrons enjoy the excitement of seeing a new play, there is also a greater risk associated with new plays, and some STBs expect to be compensated for this in the form of a lower ticket price.

“They’ll take more risk on something that is a low price point, like under \$30.”

Atlanta



This discrepancy is particularly pronounced for younger buyers.



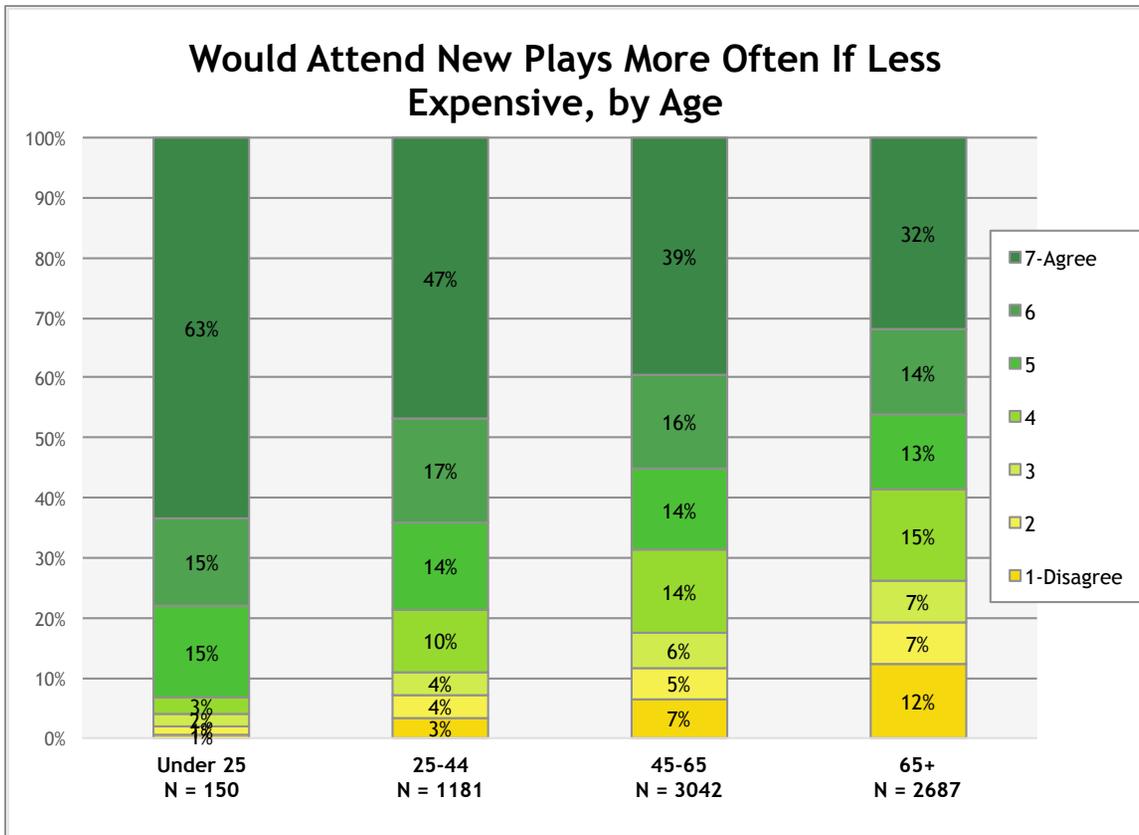
- About half of the STBs in the younger age cohorts (under 45) would prefer to see a new play than a classic, but most would pay the same for both, and over a quarter would pay more to see an established play.

Q10. All else being equal, which play would you attend if the only real difference were that...

Q12. All else being equal, how much are you willing to pay to see a new play versus a play with an established track record?



About half of all STBs under 45 say they would attend new plays more often if tickets were less expensive.



- From this chart alone, it is unclear whether the reduced price sensitivity in the older cohorts is due to lower interest in new plays, fewer financial constraints (meaning that they can already see all the new plays they want), or whether there are other barriers that would keep them from attending even if tickets were less expensive.

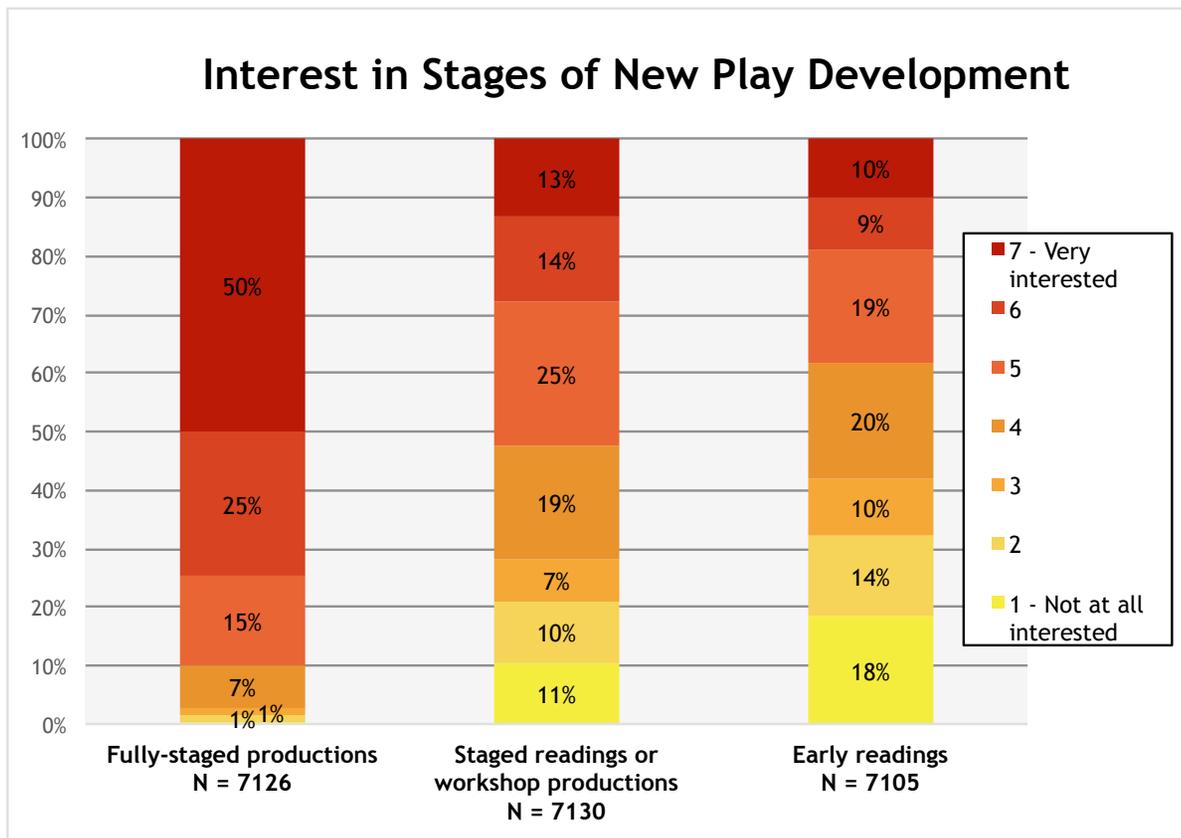
“The price point varied for people. Some people said it has to be below \$45. Other people said, ‘Well, if it’s \$125, I’ll see anything.’”
New York

“Cost was a big variable as well, especially for our younger viewer who is in school and she couldn’t afford to go out as much.”
Chicago

“Time was as much a factor as cost ... very few people talked about the price they were willing to pay or not willing to pay, that wasn’t the thing.”
New York



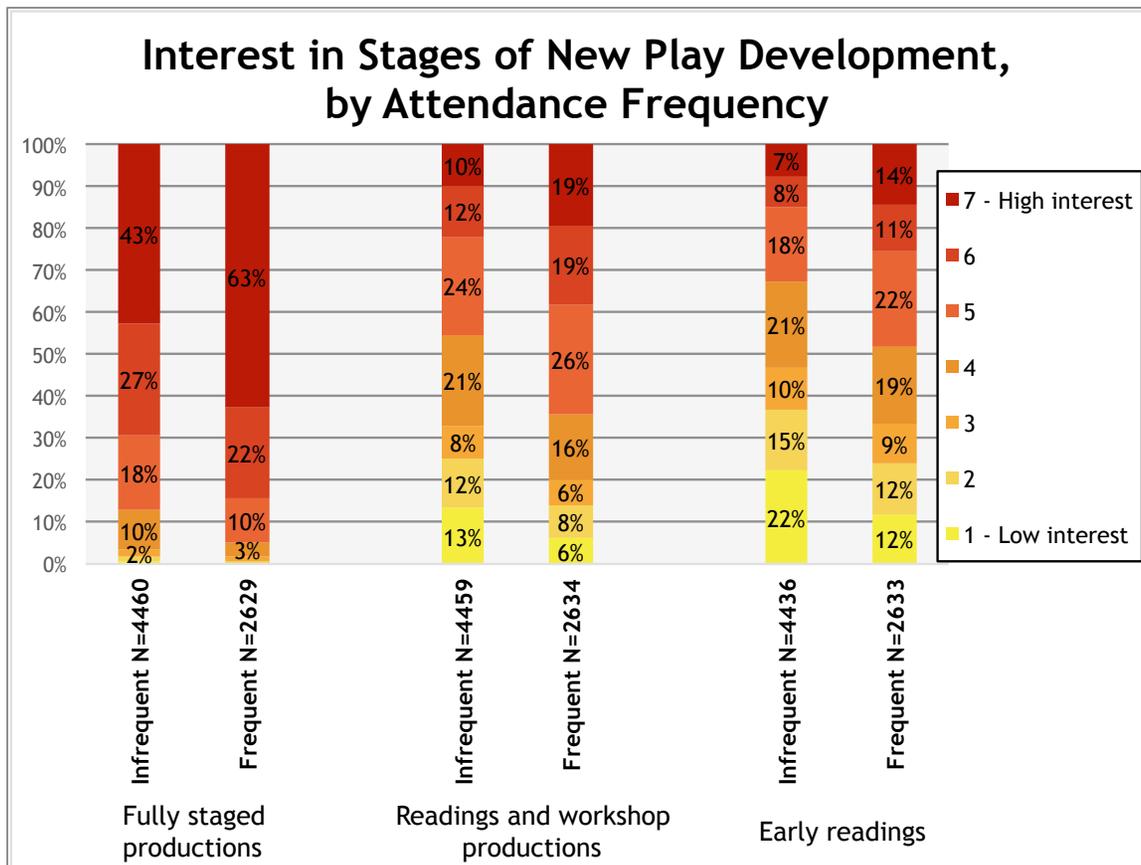
Overall, three quarters of all STBs are interested or very interested in seeing fully staged productions of new works, but interest drops for seeing plays in earlier stages of development.



- Nonetheless, about 20% to 25% express high or very high interest (6 or 7) in attending plays that are still in development.
- For early readings of works that are still in development, however, those at the top end of the scale are outweighed by those at the very bottom. The average falls below the midpoint of 4.
- Younger STBs are slightly more likely than older STBs to express interest in “fully staged productions of new plays.”

“They wanted to see the finished product after it had been perfected.”
San Francisco

STBs who go to the theatre frequently express greater interest in all phases of new play development.



- While the same general pattern of reduced interest in earlier stages of development holds true for frequent and infrequent theatre-goers, those who attend frequently are notably more interested in all phases of new play development.

“Staged readings, developmental readings, open first rehearsals—when I asked them if that’s something they’d be interested in, most of them were very interested in it, and they said it would make them more likely to take a risk on buying a ticket for a new play.”

Washington DC

“They kept [saying,] ‘I’d love to know the process. Is there any way I can be a fly on the wall during rehearsal? Can you guys live-stream five, ten minutes of rehearsal so we understand what goes on?’”

New York



While some people avoid plays that are still in development because they want a polished product, others fear they might unduly influence the playwright's work.

“Just show us the polished product ... I don't want to see how the sausage is made.” New York

“I was really surprised that people don't want to impact the writer's vision. They [said,] ‘That's not my job. That's not why I go to the theatre. And it's not even my place, it wouldn't be right. I actually want the emotional experience of whatever you want to give me.’” Chicago

“She said that the artist should be genuine and people need to be open to experiencing the artist's vision, that artists shouldn't be writing ... a watered-down version of what they think the audience wants.” Boston

“They didn't really want to engage with the creative process, with the playwright, they want to go see a show and be entertained.” Chicago

“They don't want to influence the product. ... There's this idea like ‘well you guys are going to have the chance affect the art tonight’ and they don't want that.” New York



Information & Engagement Preferences



What do audiences want to know about a play (and when do they want to find out)?

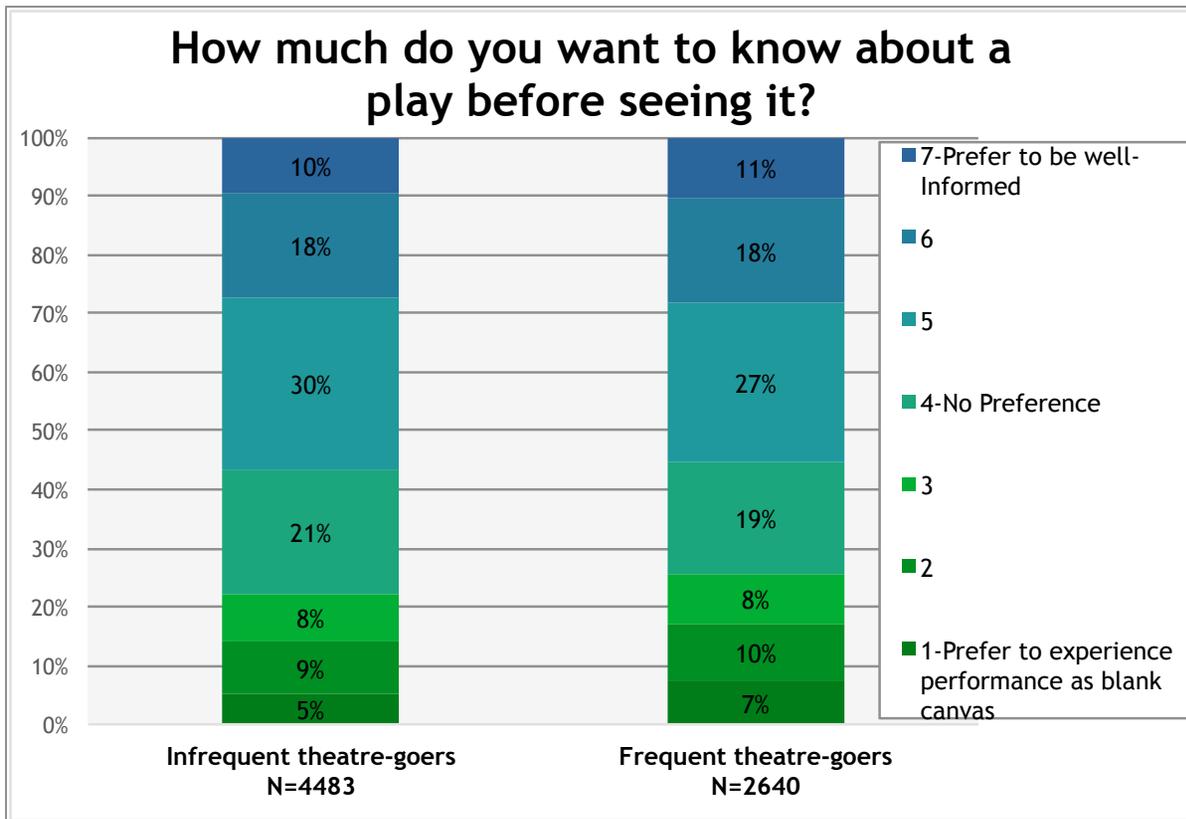
“Content was ... number one. ... I want to know what the story is. That’s the only thing I care about.”
Los Angeles

“I make a first impression off of what I see. If the poster is great then I don’t read anything else.”
San Francisco

“Plot and theme, in other words, the blurb that we write— it was the most important thing for all of them. They were all like, ‘I just want to know what the story is about.’”
Washington DC

“[The interviewees preferred to] go to a play and see a bad production than go to a play and see [something] they didn’t expect. ... [One woman said,] ‘When I see costumes on the poster and they’re not the costumes I see on the stage, it makes me angry.’”
Boston

In terms of the desire for information about upcoming performances in advance, STBs reported a wide range of preferences.

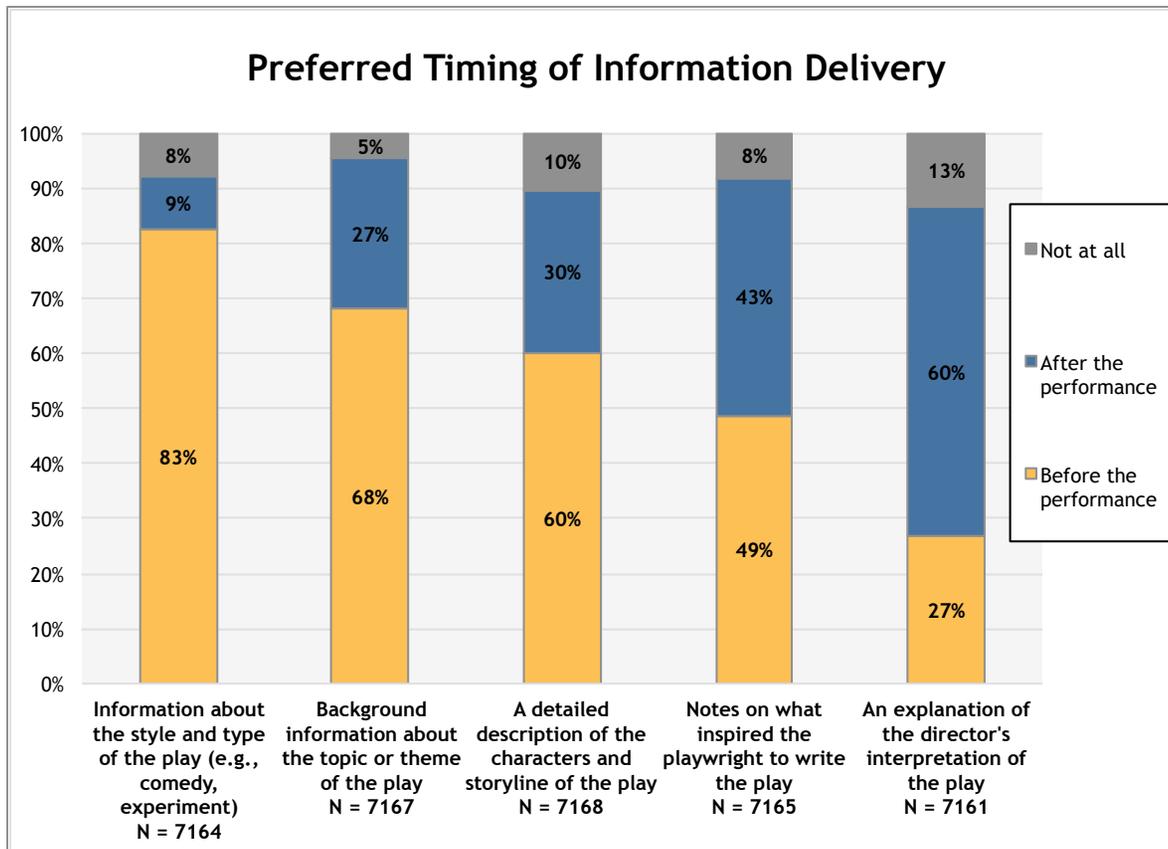


- The most frequently selected score (5), suggests a slight preference for advance information.
- While one might expect frequent theatre-goers to require less guidance as they enter into a performance, there is in fact little difference between frequent and infrequent theatre-goers in this regard.
- Overall, results suggest that STBs are diverse in their preferences for advance preparation.

Q14. Some people like to arrive at the theatre well-informed about the play they are about to see, while others prefer not to know much about the play, so as to receive the work as a “blank canvas” and without too much context or expectations. All else being equal, where are you along this continuum?



There are notable difference between the types of information that STBs are likely to want to receive in advance of seeing a new play versus afterwards.



- Most STBs want information about the general style or type of play, the topic, and descriptions of the plot and characters in advance of the performance.
 - The desire for a detailed description of the plot ahead of time suggests they're not concerned with "spoilers."
- Notes on the director's interpretation of the play are most likely to be desired afterwards.

“One person said that she would much rather learn about the creative process of a new work after the fact.”

Chicago

Q15. When would you be most likely to read or watch the following kinds of information about a new play (i.e., a world or local premiere), if it were available:

The wide variety of preferences and habits related to accessing information about performances was also evident in the interviews.

“All three of our [interviewees said] they don’t trust the theatre web sites. ... except maybe a synopsis of the play ... They said, ‘you’re gonna lie to me’ [to sell tickets]. After [the performance], they will go [to the website for additional information].” Los Angeles

“They all read their program in intermission. They generally didn’t read it before the show. They read it at intermission, and finished it on the train. And researched on their own afterwards.” New York

“There were just a shocking number of them who said, ‘Reviews don’t matter, I don’t like to read them, I don’t want to read them,’ or, ‘I read them afterwards.’” Washington DC

“They do do a ton of research. They don’t do it on the theatre website though. They do their own research. They look up reviews. They look up past productions. They look up issues about the play. They look up the playwright. They do an insane amount of research before and after.” Los Angeles



How do audiences want to engage?

“A really interesting point raised by one of our older [interviewees was] that theatre is the last place where it isn’t immersive ... If you want behind the scenes photos of your favorite movies or you want to follow your sports team [you can], but theatre is a mystery until the moment you sit down in your seat ... and that was bad because they feel like we’re shutting them out and not inviting them to be a part of the process.” Atlanta

“We had people who actually enjoyed meeting the cast directly after the show, or taking pictures of them, that was a part of the whole ritual for them.” Atlanta

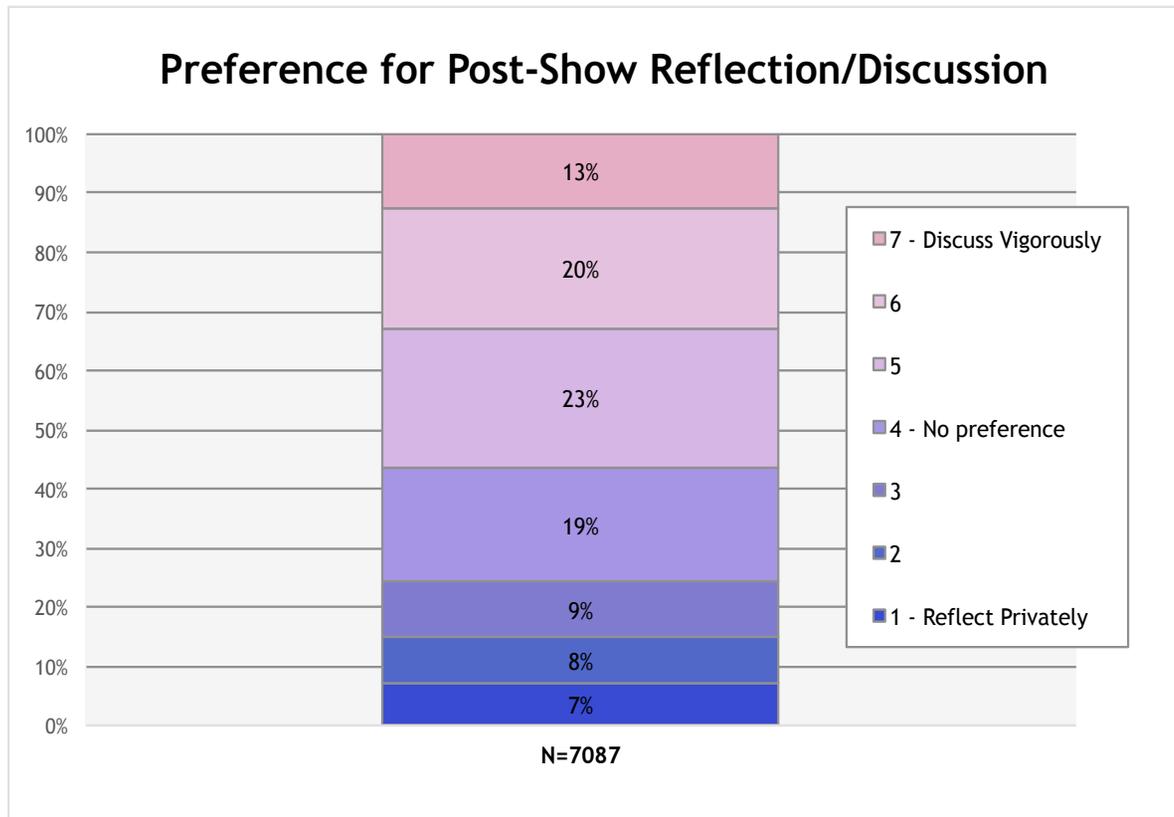
“She was really interested not so much in the debate aspect of it but just in hearing what other people [think]—[not the ones] she went to see it with, because that’s who she always sees shows with—but the other people in the room.” Chicago

“All three of our people were interested in the playwright but ... from behind the glass. ... They were fascinated by talk backs...but they wanted to listen and not participate. They wanted to watch videos with the playwright, but God forbid we socialize in the lobby.” Los Angeles

“My big takeaway was ... how interested people are in process. They kept asking ... is there any way I can be a fly on the wall during rehearsal? Can you guys live-screen five, ten minutes of rehearsal so we understand what goes on, I'd really love to see it.” New York



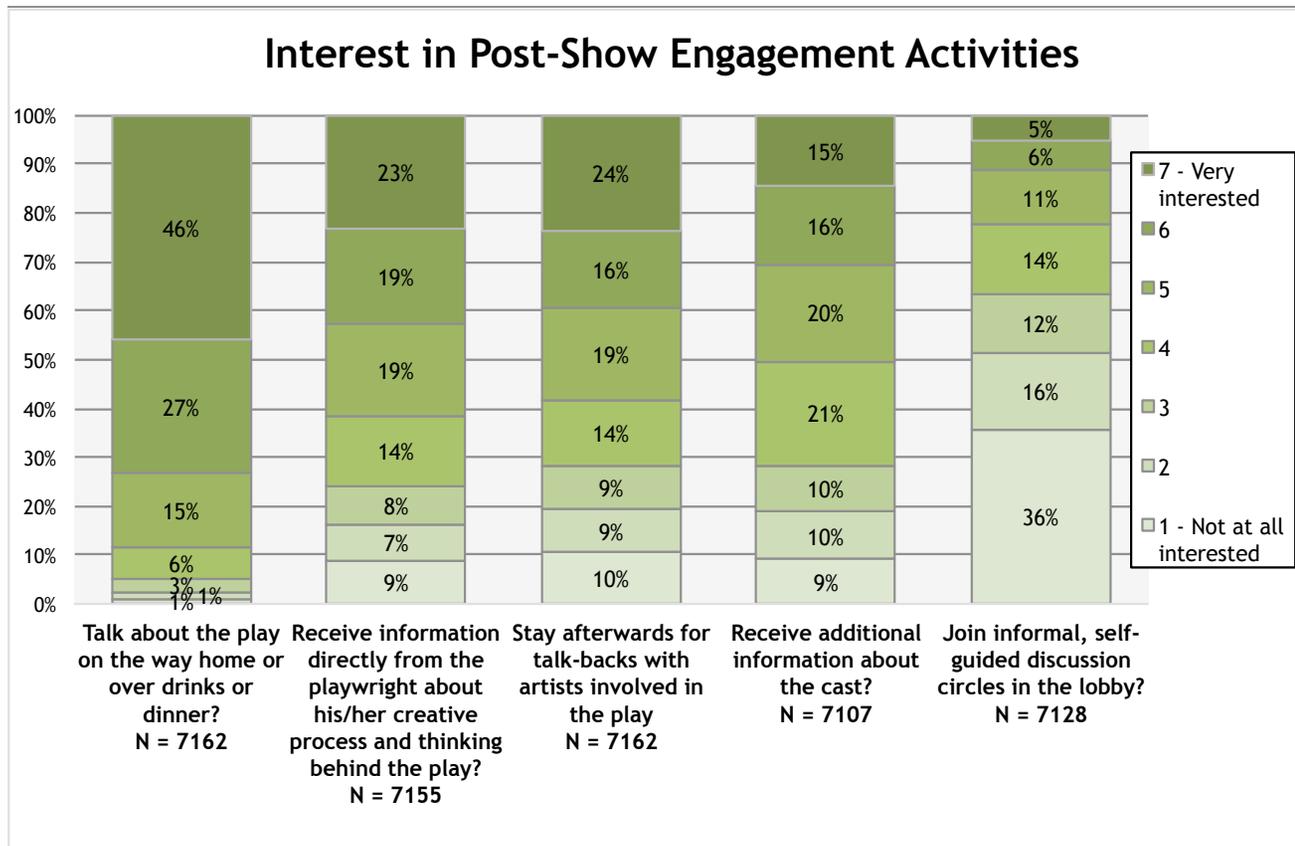
STBs like to process the performances they've experienced in many ways.



- Overall there is a moderate preference for reflecting on plays in conversation with others. But many STBs prefer to reflect privately.
- What's more, the desire to talk about performances is correlated with all forms of engagement activities. (Correlations range from 0.17 for receiving additional information about the cast to 0.40 for participating in talkbacks.) That means while the “talkers” want to engage in many different ways, those who prefer to reflect privately are less interested in all types of engagement that were tested on the survey.
- This raises an important question:
How can theatres support those who prefer to reflect privately?

Q16. Some people enjoy vigorously discussing the meaning or merits of a play immediately after the performance, while others prefer to reflect quietly on their own. All else being equal, where are you along this continuum?

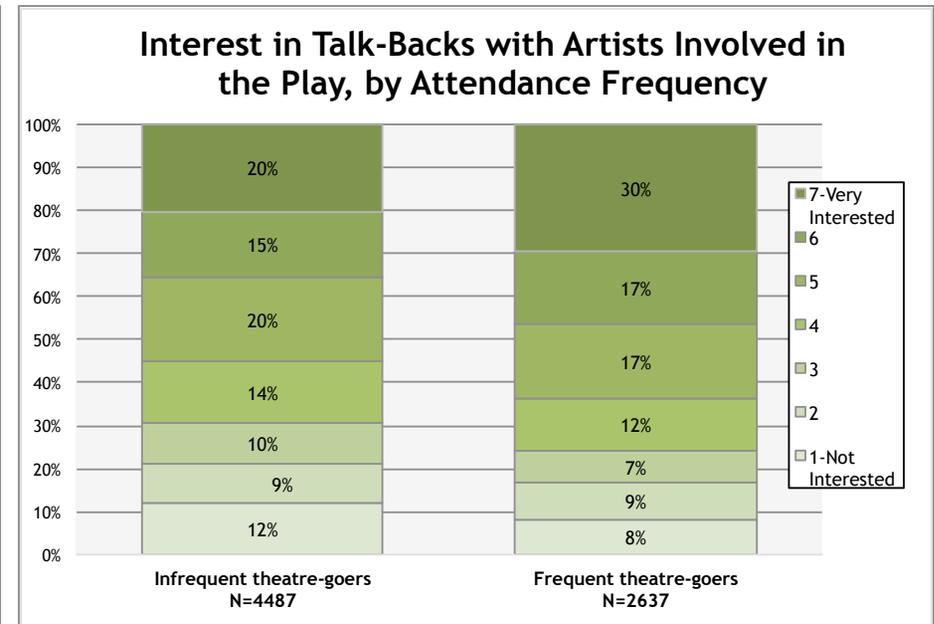
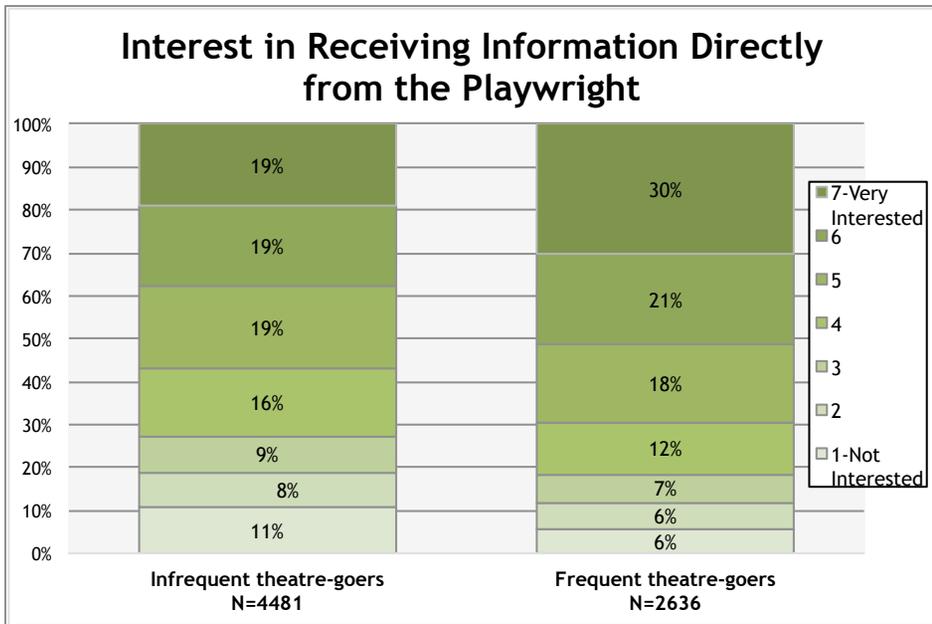
Aside from informal social discussions, STBs are most interested in receiving information directly from the playwright and/or talks-backs with the artists after seeing a world or local premiere.



- The dominant modality of post-performance meaning-making is talking about the work on the way home. Even STB's who prefer private reflection over vigorous discussions are interested in this form of post-performance conversation (mean score: 5.2).
- Results suggest that post-performance access to insights directly from playwrights would be as popular as talk-backs, perhaps even more so if the content can be delivered digitally.
- Not surprisingly, STB's who prefer to reflect in private have little interest in talk-backs or discussion circles. However, those who only have a moderate preference for private reflection (2s and 3s on the chart on the previous page), still show slight positive interest in receiving additional information from playwrights and about casts (mean scores between 4.1 and 4.4) suggesting that this might be a way to reach them. (Not shown here.)

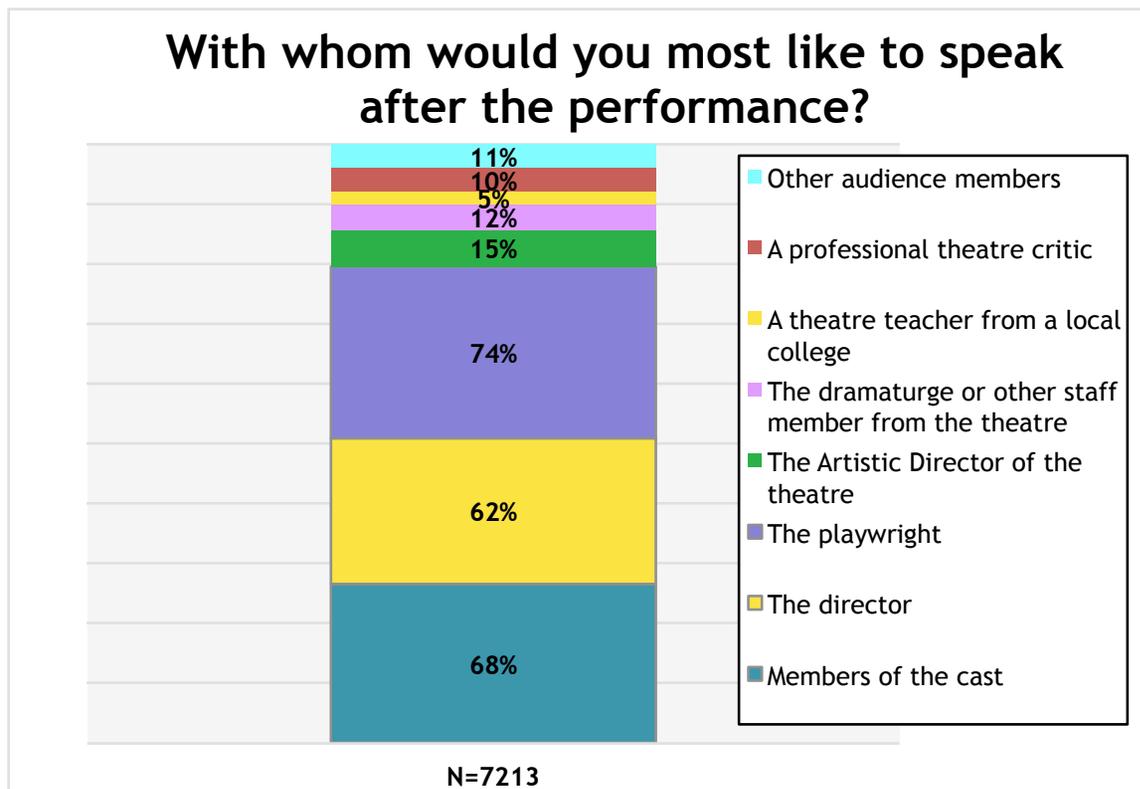
Q17. What is your level of interest in staying afterwards for...

Frequent theatre-goers are substantially more interested in hearing from playwrights and in staying afterwards for talk-backs with artists.



- While interest in various forms of post-show engagement are largely consistent among subgroups, the overall preference for information from playwrights and talk-backs with artists (seen on the previous slide) is largely driven by frequent theatre-goers.

At post-show discussions, STBs are most interested in speaking with playwrights (74%) followed by cast members (68%), and the director (62%).



- Results strongly indicate demand for interactions with playwrights, if theatres and playwrights could find a way of doing it.
- Note: Percentages don't sum to 100% because multiple selections were allowed.

Most audience members who participated in interviews know very little about the authors of the plays they see.

“None of them knew the names of playwrights, and it wasn’t important in their decision.”

Boston

“The name of the playwright doesn’t matter.”

Washington DC

“They didn’t really care who wrote the play... the playwright is just never around when they come – when they encounter the play the playwright is not there. It’s just a name on the program. So they just didn’t know.”

Atlanta

“When [asked whether they] want to talk to a playwright, it was like, “I don’t know what I would say to a playwright...”

Boston

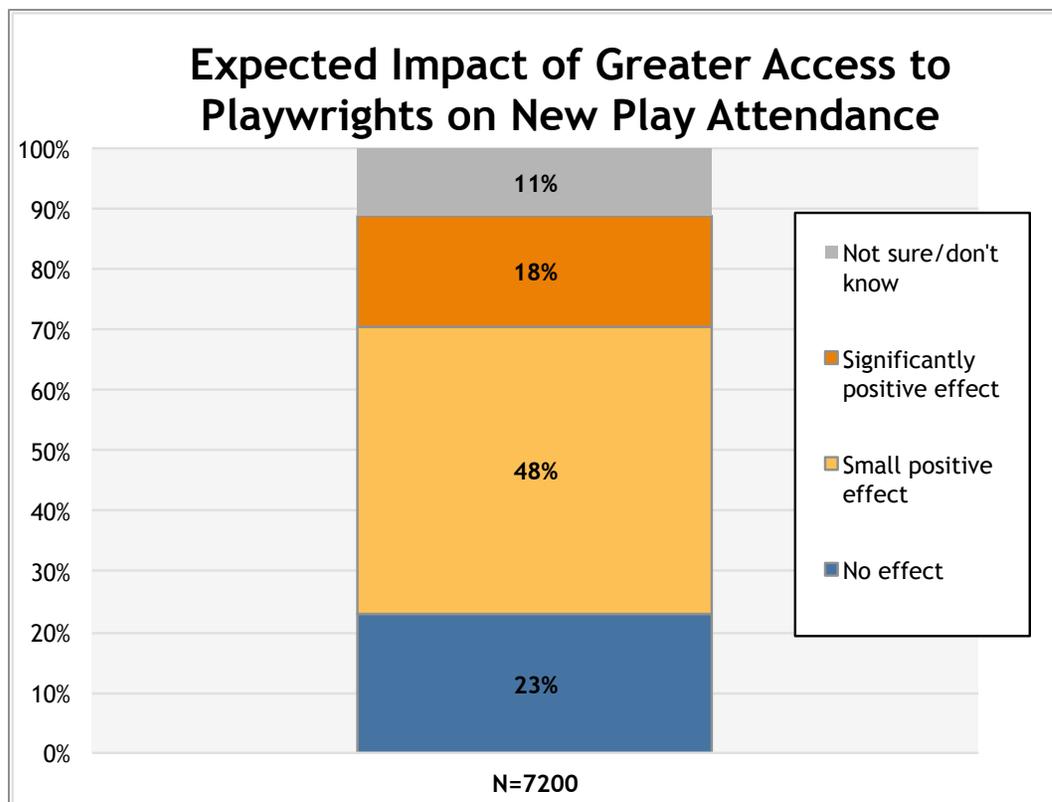
- For many, the playwright and the process of writing a play are mysteries, and for that reason they don’t feel much of a connection. That doesn’t mean they’re disinterested, they just don’t know what to imagine, given their current lack of access.

“I felt that people have a huge gap between their perception of what it would be like to talk to a playwright [and] their interest level in that experience. They think ... playwrights wouldn’t want to talk to me, or that’s not my business, or what would that even be?’ I think they don’t even know what to imagine. And when they found out that the person that was interviewing them is a playwright, they were so hungry, they were just so charmed and interested and wanted to know everything about [them].”

Chicago



The survey results also indicate that greater access to playwrights would increase interest in new plays.



- Two thirds of STBs say that greater access to playwrights through means such as pre-recorded video interviews, written statements about their plays, and live online video discussions with playwrights would have a positive effect on interest in seeing new plays.

Q19. If theatres offered audiences greater access to playwrights – through pre-recorded video interviews, written statements about the plays they've written, live discussions with playwrights via web video, etc. – would it have any affect on your interest in attending new plays?

Perhaps as a result of the lack of experience with playwrights, interviewees expressed a wide range of ideas about how they would want to connect.

“They would be interested [to know] ‘where are they now’ in terms of plays. ... They’re interested in the trajectory of new plays as well as playwrights. ...because ...the biggest thing about seeing a new play that got them excited was being in the know, being among the first.” Atlanta

“The thing they wanted to ask the playwright was: ‘What drove you to write this?’ It wasn’t even what is the play about, it was where did it come from, personally.” Boston

“A lot of people were saying that if the playwright was available they would talk to them and also even a pre-recorded message would be great. So they were really interested in that, once they figured out that there WAS a playwright [i.e., a real person one can talk to].” Atlanta

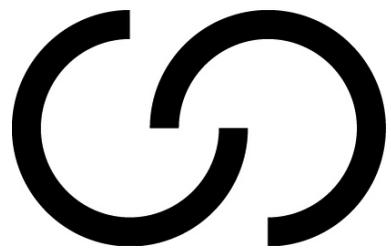
“[Our twenty-year-old interviewee said,] if playwrights had more of an online presence ... like the bands that [she] follow[s], they post things on Instagram, little videos ... and you kind of get to see back stage. She said, “The only way you’re going to get young people into the theater is to get them attached to the writers or to the actors.” San Francisco

“A lot of people were interested in hearing more from playwrights, hearing about process, but very few people were interested in engaging the playwrights in conversation themselves.” Washington DC

“I don’t want to meet the playwright after the show because that would be too scary...I might say the wrong thing ... I imagine that this is [the playwright’s] baby, andhow do I talk to them about their baby?” San Francisco

“She did say she would love to talk to a playwright in a small group. Not a big group, in a small group, and pick their brain about how they got the story.” Chicago





Analysis of New Play Affinity Scores



Overview of Analysis

- To further explore the motivations, interests, and behaviors of STBs who have varying levels of exposure and affinity to new plays, we calculated a “New Play Affinity Score” (NPAS) for each respondent based on responses to eight different survey questions.
- As we’ve seen, the level of self-reported interest in seeing productions of new plays is high, with 90% of all respondents selecting a score of 5 or higher on a 7 point scale (see p. 44). However, the NPAS reveals a broad range of relationships, ranging from people who approach new plays with some trepidation to those who take every opportunity they can to engage with new work and want to be a part of the development process.
- Using this score, we divide the respondents into three groups – New Play Skeptics, Enthusiasts, and Co-Creators – based on their affinity levels, and explore their preferences and interests.

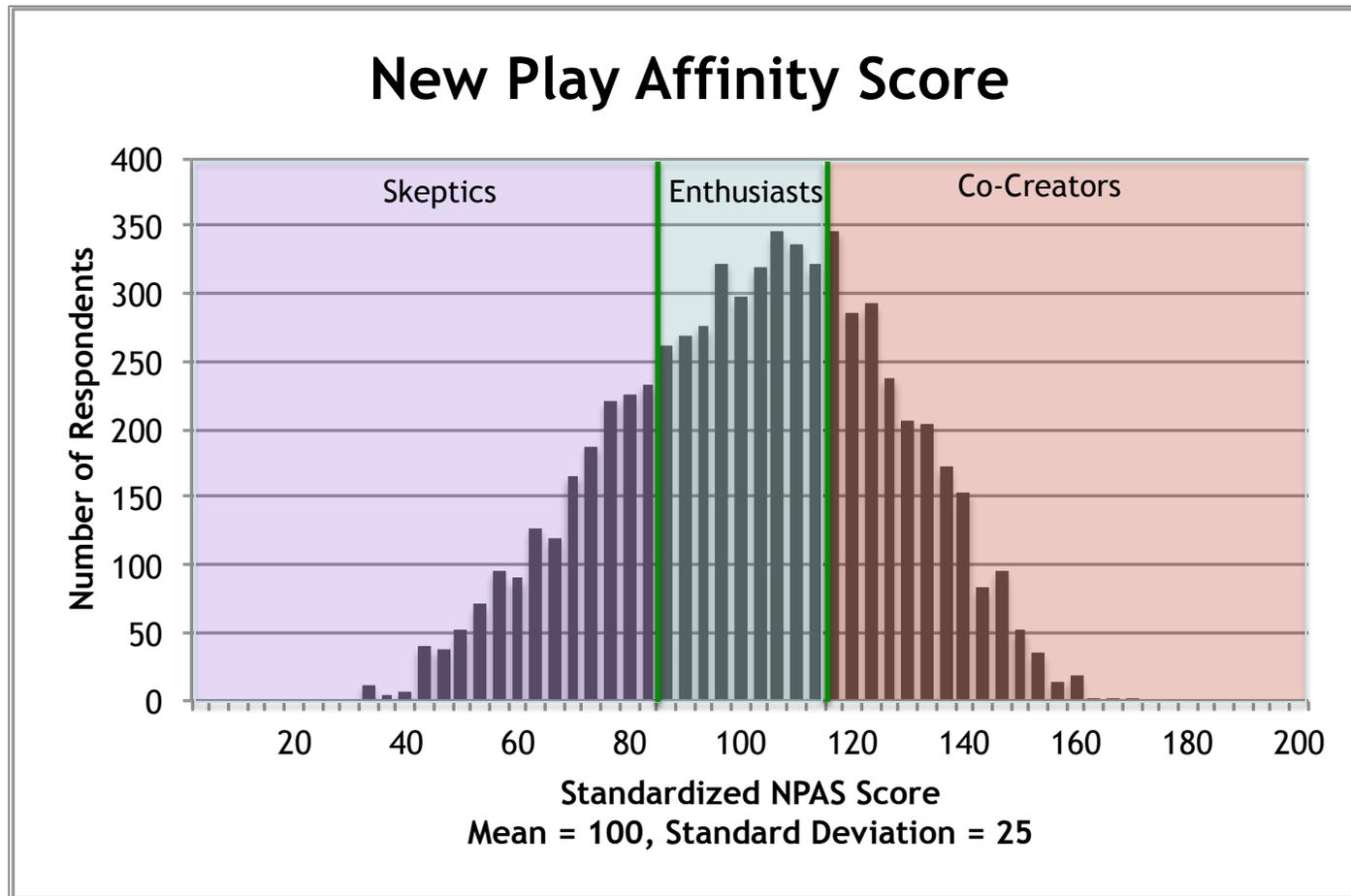


The following components are included in the calculation of the NPAS:

| | Max. Points |
|--|-------------|
| • Number of new plays attended in past 12 months | 8 |
| • Motivation for theatre-going: to discover new plays or playwrights | 6 |
| • Interest in fully-staged productions of new plays | 6 |
| • Interest in staged readings/workshop productions of new plays | 6 |
| • Interest in early readings of new plays still in development | 6 |
| • Preference for new plays over classics | 3 |
| • Willingness to pay more to see a new play vs. an established play | 3 |
| • Considers seeing new plays as a challenge that is relished | 3 |

The relatively high internal consistency of these variables (Cronbach's Alpha= 0.73) suggests that they all indicate an underlying factor: affinity for new plays.

The distribution of NPAS's is a good approximation of a “normal” bell curve.



- Setting the group boundaries half a standard deviation above and below the mean places 29.4% of respondents into the low affinity category (“Skeptics”), 37.4% into the medium affinity category (“Enthusiasts”), and 33.2% into the high affinity category (“Co-Creators”).

Four characteristics determine a large portion of an STB's New Play Affinity Score

Regression analysis shows that two motivations and the willingness to take certain kinds of aesthetic risks determine almost 30% of respondents' NPAS ($R^2=0.28$):

Motivations for theatre-going:

- To challenge my assumptions and ideas about the world (beta = 0.215)
- To engage with important issues in my community (beta = 0.211)

Risk factors

- I enjoy being taken beyond my comfort zone with a piece of theatre (beta = 0.173)
- I enjoy plays without a clear narrative (i.e., abstract or non-linear form) (beta = 0.142)

The higher beta scores for the motivations indicate that they have a stronger effect on the NPAS.

The demographic variables age, gender, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment have little or no statistical effect on affinity for new plays.



New Play Skeptics

- Prefer to be well-informed about what they're going to see before arriving at the theatre. (Mean score: +0.6*).
 - The desire for information in advance of seeing a play is the one form of engagement in which Skeptics show a slightly greater interest than Enthusiasts and Co-Creators.
 - Receiving information in advance may reduce the sense of uncertainty or risk that Skeptics may associate with seeing a new (i.e., untested) play.
 - More experienced new-play goers may not perceive new works as being so risky, since they are more familiar with new work and the development process. Alternatively, they might naturally have a greater aesthetic curiosity and tolerance for risk.
- Are most interested in talking about the play on the way home or over drinks. (Mean: +1.8)
- Are not otherwise terribly interested in engagement activities.
 - All other median scores are below the 0, indicating a degree of disinterest.



New Play Enthusiasts

- Fall between Skeptics and Co-Creators in terms of their desire for advance information about plays they're going to see and their desire to discuss plays afterwards (Mean: +0.5 and +0.6 respectively).
- Are most interested in talking about the play on the way home or over drinks—even more so than Skeptics (Mean: +2.0).
- Unlike Skeptics, they are also somewhat interested in hearing from the playwright about his or her process, participating in talk-backs, and receiving additional information about the cast (Means: +0.8, +0.7, +0.4).
 - However, they are not interested in joining other audience members in the lobby to discuss shows in informal, self-guided discussion groups (Mean: -1.1).

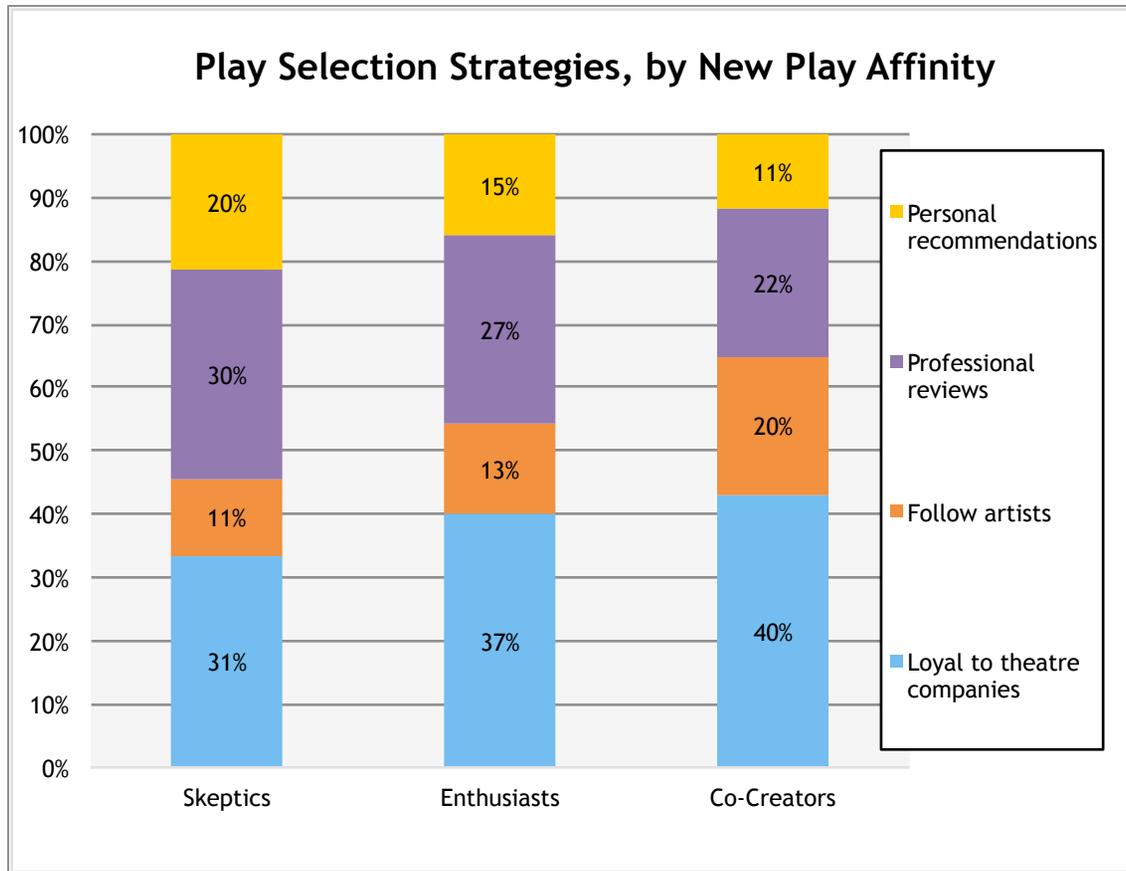


New Play Co-Creators

- Feel less of a need to be well-informed before going to a see new play than either Skeptics or Enthusiasts.
 - But the mean is still in the positive range, indicating there is, on average, a slight preference for advance information even among Co-Creators (Mean: +0.3)
- Are more interested in vigorously discussing plays immediately after performances than others (Mean: +0.8).
- Are more interested in all types of engagement activity than either Skeptics or Enthusiasts.
 - Mean scores are +1.0 or above for getting information from the playwright, participating in talk-backs, and learning more about the cast (+1.6, +1.3, +1.0, respectively) and +2.1 for discussing over drinks or on the way home.
 - Among Co-Creators, the mean interest level for joining informal discussion groups remains slightly below 0 (Mean: -0.6), but that's still higher than for other groups.



In selecting plays to see, Co-Creators are more likely to follow particular theatre companies or artists, whereas Skeptics rely more heavily on professional reviews and recommendations from friends.

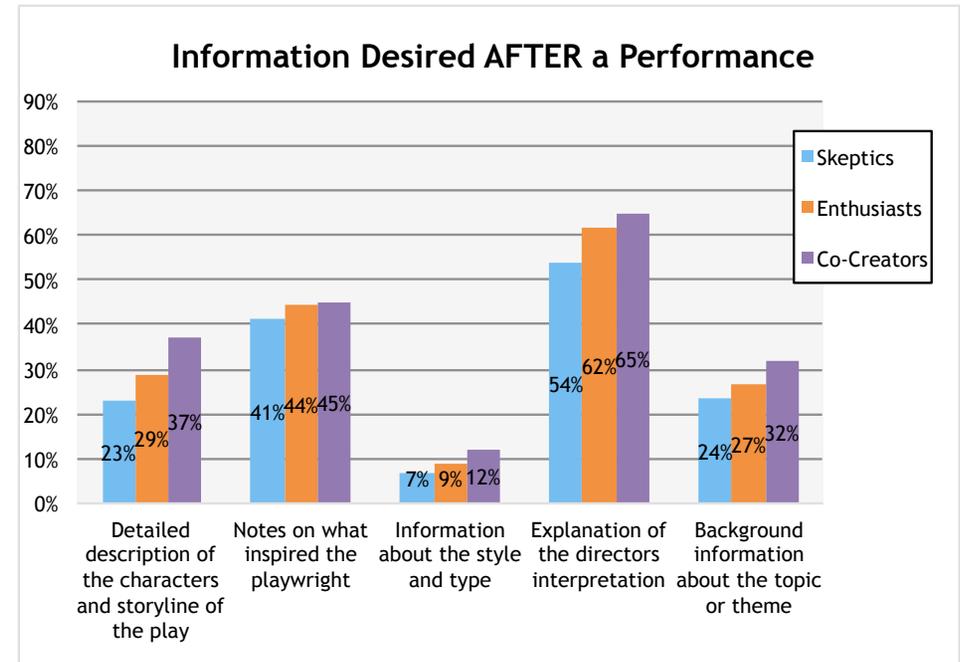
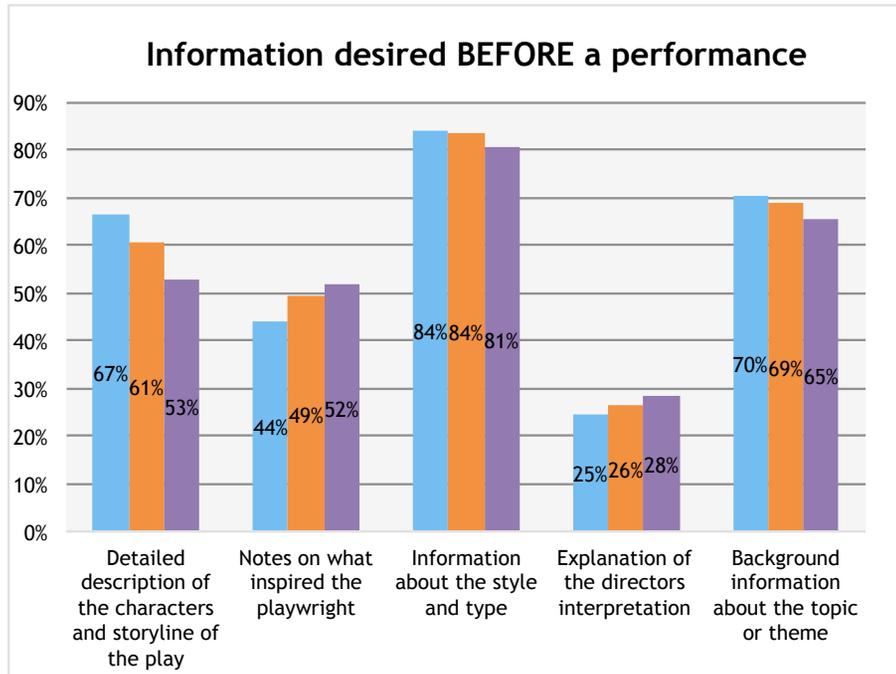


- Co-Creators and Enthusiasts are similar in their loyalty to particular theatre companies, but Co-Creators are more likely to follow particular artists.

- Fostering closer and more personal connections to the generative artists may stimulate greater interest in seeing new work.

“If [a playwright she was interested in] had a presence on Twitter or on Facebook, she said that she garnered a ‘feigned personal connection’ with them, which made her more likely to go see their show.” Boston

While the overall ranking of types of information desired before or after performances is similar across all New Play Affinity groups, patterns emerge in the rates at which each group seeks types of information.



- Whereas Skeptics want basic information about new plays they are going to see (style, theme, characters) before the production more often than Co-Creators, Co-Creators are more likely to read comments from the playwright and notes on the director’s interpretation as part of their advance preparation, relatively speaking.
- Co-Creators are also more interested in receiving additional information after the performance than less committed new-play goers. This holds true across all types of information.
 - This suggests providing basic information upfront for general audiences, while making materials that allow more committed new-play goers to dig in deeper accessible both before and after the performance.



Acknowledgements

INTERVIEWERS

Atlanta: Lisa Adler, Justin Anderson, Margaret Baldwin*, Carolyn Cook, Phillip Depoy*, Daryl Fazio*, Amelia Fischer, Gabrielle Fulton*, Neeley Gossett*, Annie Harrison*, Celise Kalke, Addae Moon, Lee Nowell, Nichole Palmietto, Lisa Paulsen, Topher Payne*, Janece Shaffer*, Michael Winn*.

Boston: Steven Bogart*, Robert Cope, Temple Gill, Michael Glicksman, Kirsten Greenidge*, MJ Halberstadt*, Lila Rose Kaplan*, Walt McGough, Charlotte Meehan*, Adara Meyers*, Nina Louise Morrison*, Bridget O'Leary, Nicholas Peterson, Kate Snodgrass*, Evan Turissini, Ryan Walsh.

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Seamus Sullivan*
Amy Young

*Playwright



Acknowledgements

THEATRES PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEWS

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| American Theater Company | Horizon Theatre Company | The Tank |
| Alliance Theatre | The House Theatre | Theatre Works Silicon Valley |
| Apollinaire Theatre Company | Huntington Theatre Company | Shakespeare Theatre Company |
| Arena Stage | Magic Theatre | Silk Road Rising |
| Arts Emerson | Marin Theatre Company | SpeakEasy Stage |
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| Central Square Theater | Moxie Theatre | Steppenwolf Theatre Company |
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