SMU DataArts

CAMBRIDGE-NEWTON-FRAMINGHAM RANKED 13th AMONG 20 MOST ARTS-VIBRANT LARGE COMMUNITIES IN THE NATION

The 8th Annual Arts Vibrancy Index from SMU DataArts Compiles List of 40 Most Vibrant Arts Communities Across the U.S., Based on Measures of Per Capita Supply, Demand and Government Support for the Arts

Newton, MA, Thursday, October 26, 2023 – SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, today released its 8th [Arts Vibrancy Index](), which identifies the Cambridge-Newton-Framingham region as number 13 in the list of 20 large communities in the United States through an analysis of the level of supply, demand, and government support for the arts in more than 900 communities across the country. Organized into three separate lists based on community population size, totaling 40 communities across the country, this year's Arts Vibrancy Index is the first to include numerical rankings since 2020, a reflection of arts organizations returning to in-person activities and performances following the easing of pandemic restrictions. Newton, along with its neighbors Cambridge and Framingham has consistently appeared on the Arts Vibrancy Index since the launch of the rankings in 2015. This year, the Cambridge-Newton-Framingham area is ranked thirteenth on the annual list of the 20 most arts-vibrant large communities in the nation.

[Related research]() by SMU DataArts shows that Local Arts Agencies (LAAs) like Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture are powerful catalysts of arts vibrancy which ensure that the arts remain an integral part of community life.

"Arts and culture provide our Newton villages with the vibrancy and community that form the bedrock of our City," said Mayor Ruthanne Fuller. She developed a Comprehensive Arts & Culture Plan that presents a strategy to strengthen and expand arts and culture throughout the City, using it as a mechanism to make Newton a more welcoming and prosperous City. The Mayor has also increased funding for arts grants and added staff to the Arts and Culture department. Director of Cultural Development, Paula Gannon says; "As the city liaison to the arts community, our days are nonstop working with residents and artists who want to bring forward programs, events and ideas to enhance the arts and culture experience in Newton. We are grateful to be working in a city that values arts and culture, and continues to be recognized as a vibrant arts presence in our state."

Fluctuations in a community's ranking occur from year to year for a variety of reasons, including the opening of an arts district or closing of a performance space as well as local economic conditions.

Arts-vibrant communities can be found in every region of the United States—a finding which arises from an objective analysis of the data, and not from selecting communities by hand to achieve geographic representation.

"The arts and culture sector was hit hard by the pandemic, and some organizations and communities are still recovering. The Index is an opportunity for communities to affirm and celebrate the individuals and organizations that are the sources of arts vibrancy in their region, whether that's artists who have mastered a local craft tradition over generations, a cultural festival that families enjoy year after year, or a cherished historic theater, museum, or arts-education center. For organizations, funders, local citizens, and public officials, the Arts Vibrancy Index is a powerful resource that leverages data-driven evidence to illuminate how the arts contribute to an area's economy and public life," stated **Dr. Zannie Voss**, Director of SMU DataArts. "One way that public leaders can spark arts vibrancy in their communities is by expanding funding for local arts agencies, which spurs arts employment, stimulates more artistic activity, and increases the strength of geographically dispersed arts-vibrant cultural resources throughout communities."

The Lists

In addition to the top arts-vibrant communities listed in the Arts Vibrancy Index, arts-vibrancy scores for every county in the United States can be viewed on an interactive map that identifies arts and cultural strengths that are present in every community. (Also known as Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Areas, these communities have boundaries that are defined by the United States Census Bureau.)

Large Communities (population: 1 million +)

On the list of the most arts-vibrant communities with populations of 1 million or more, one city is new to the list: **Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI**. **San Francisco-San Mateo-Redwood City, CA**, sits at the top of the list for the first time since 2018 and **Philadelphia, PA**, has moved into the top 5 for the first time ever. After debuting in the 20th spot in 2020, **Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN**, has skyrocketed to the 11th spot.

1. San Francisco-San Mateo-Redwood City, CA
2. New York-Jersey City-White Plains, NY-NJ
3. Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV
4. Boston, MA
5. Philadelphia, PA
6. Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI
7. Frederick-Gaithersburg-Rockville, MD
8. Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN
9. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale, CA
10. New Orleans-Metairie, LA
11. Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN
12. Cleveland-Elyria, OH
13. Cambridge-Newton-Framingham, MA
14. Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO
15. Pittsburgh, PA
16. Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA
17. Seattle-Bellevue-Kent, WA
18. Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI
19. Chicago-Naperville-Evanston, IL
20. St. Louis, MO-IL

Medium Communities (population: 100,000 – 1 million)

Medium communities are home to populations ranging from 100,000 to 1 million people. **Canton-Massillon, OH**, is new to this list, while **Santa Fe, NM**; **San Rafael, CA**; and **Pittsfield, MA**, have appeared on the list of top medium communities every year since 2015. **Ann Arbor** and **Kalamazoo-Portage, MI**, are returning to this list following their 2022 debuts.

1. Pittsfield, MA
2. Santa Fe, NM
3. Ithaca, NY
4. San Rafael, CA
5. Kalamazoo-Portage, MI
6. Boulder, CO
7. Missoula, MT
8. Canton-Massillon, OH
9. Burlington-South Burlington, VT
10. Ann Arbor, MI

Small Communities (population <100,000)

Small communities are defined as areas with populations under 100,000. **Jackson, WY-ID**, and **Bennington, VT**, have made the list of small communities every year since 2015, with Jackson maintaining its ranking as first among small communities for the past four years.

1. Jackson, WY-ID
2. Brevard, NC
3. Steamboat Springs, CO
4. Bennington, VT
5. Easton, MD
6. Glenwood Springs, CO
7. Hailey, ID
8. Juneau, AK
9. Brookings, SD
10. Oneonta, NY

The overall Arts Vibrancy Index is composed of 13 unique measures which cover aspects of supply, demand, and public support for arts and culture, and are adjusted for cost of living and population differences among communities. In this year's index, the analysis approach was updated to weight the 13 inputs based on their relative explanatory power for the underlying concept of arts vibrancy. This approach improves measurement consistency in the face of data availability delays or other changes in individual datasets from year to year. All financial metrics have been adjusted for cost of living in order to

level the playing field. The cost of doing business varies based on local conditions, so the same dollar goes further in some communities than others.

Cambridge-Newton-Framingham ranks 13th on the list of the [most arts-vibrant large communities](#) in the nation according to [SMU DataArts](#).

The Arts Vibrancy Index recognizes and celebrates arts vibrancy across the United States through an analysis of the level of supply, demand, and government support for the arts in more than 900 communities across the country. Cambridge-Newton-Framingham has consistently appeared on the Arts Vibrancy Index since the launch of the rankings in 2015. This achievement is a testament to the passion, creativity, and dedication of many arts' organizations as well as individual arts and arts' advocates in Newton. Their artistic endeavors enrich the lives of residents and help shape the identity of our city.

ABOUT SMU DATAARTS

SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, is a project of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University. The mission of SMU DataArts is to provide and engage both organizations and individuals with the evidence-based insights needed to collectively build strong, vibrant, and equitable arts communities. Its research efforts range from academic papers published in leading journals, applied research undertaken with community partners, and actionable insights shared directly with arts practitioners. Its programs provide business intelligence tools and resources to help arts leaders leverage data to answer critical management questions and connect research analyses to their own work. Recent publications include research reports on [emergence from the COVID-19 crisis](#); [the alchemy that drives high performing arts organizations of color](#); [audience diversity, equity and inclusion in large performing arts organizations](#); [impact of investments made in diverse creative communities](#); and more.

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