

Highlights from the National Survey of Dance Audiences



Research Commissioned by Dance/USA,
with funding support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
and The James Irvine Foundation

July 15, 2011



Purpose: To learn how audiences want to engage with dance



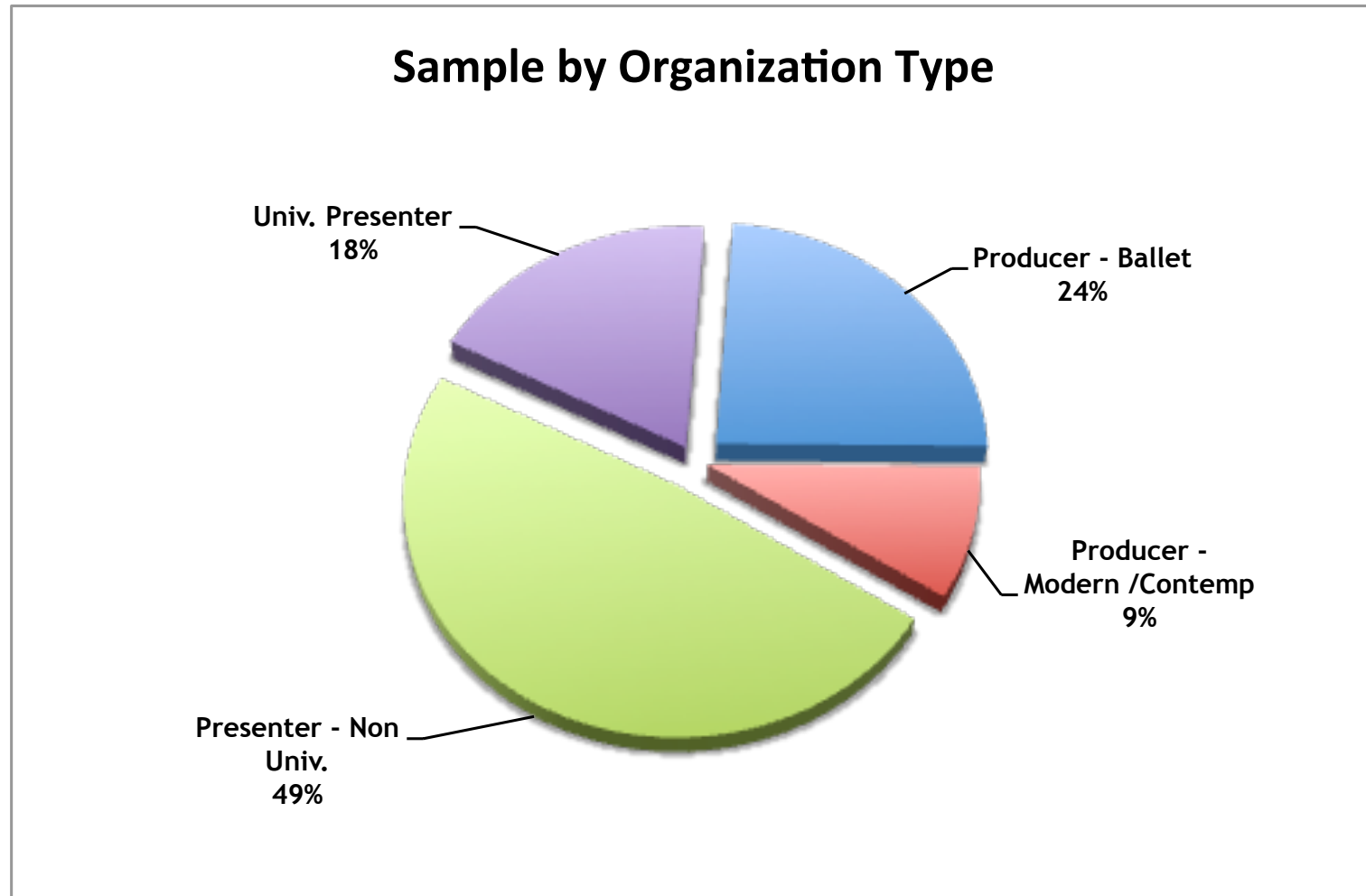
Multi-Organization Online Survey of Dance Ticket Buyers

- Participation was free and open to Dance/USA's organization-members
 - Must have a list of at least 500 ticket-buyer email addresses (any purchase, past 3 years)
- 42 organizations participated
- Data collection occurred July-August 2010
- 35 organizations received at least 100 responses, and received a confidential report on their results
- In total, 7,454 dance ticket buyers completed the survey



Presenters account for two-thirds of the sample

(N=7,454)



Key Characteristics of Respondents

- 73% are female
- Average age is 51
- 62% are married
- 21% have children under 18
- 18% are retired

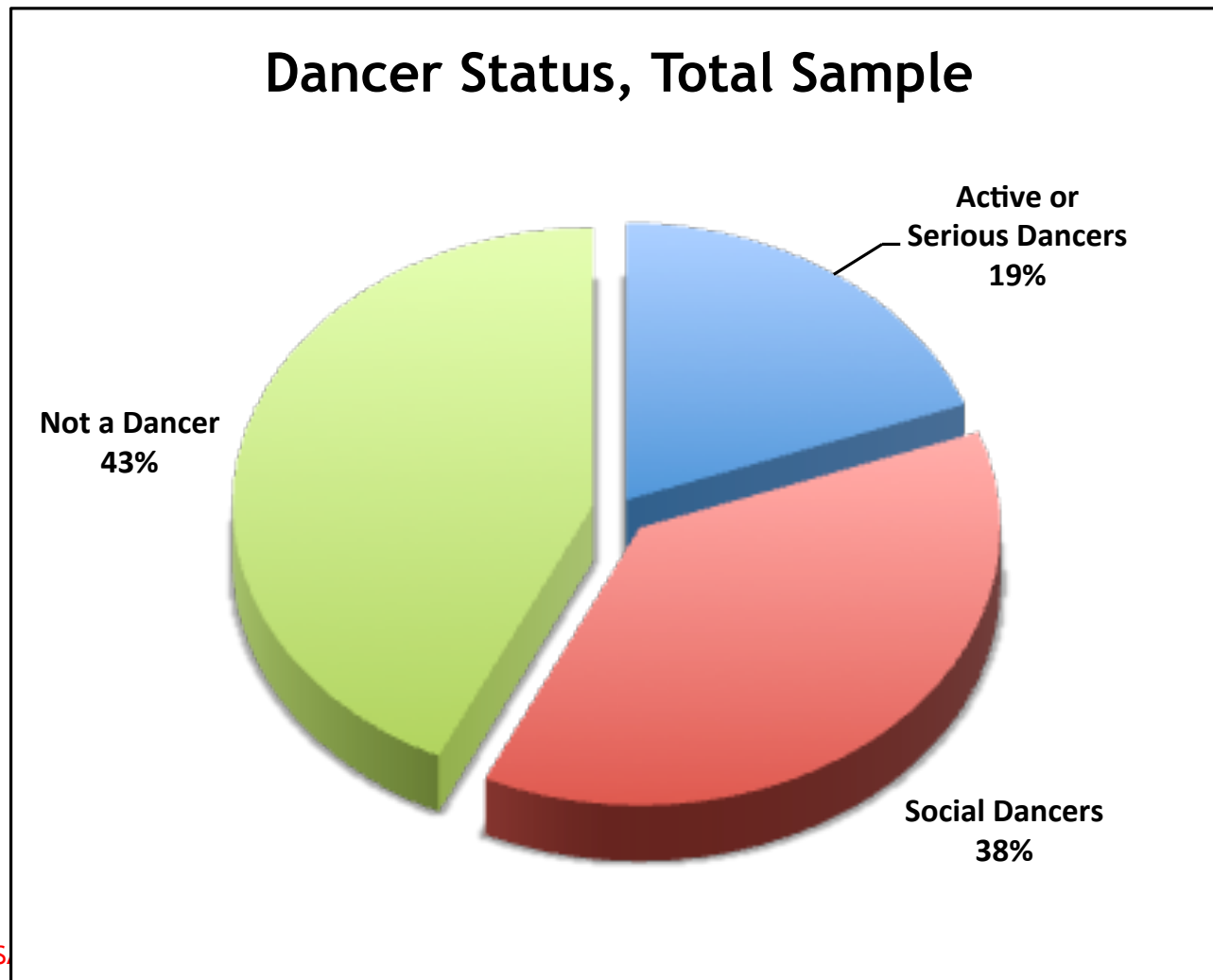




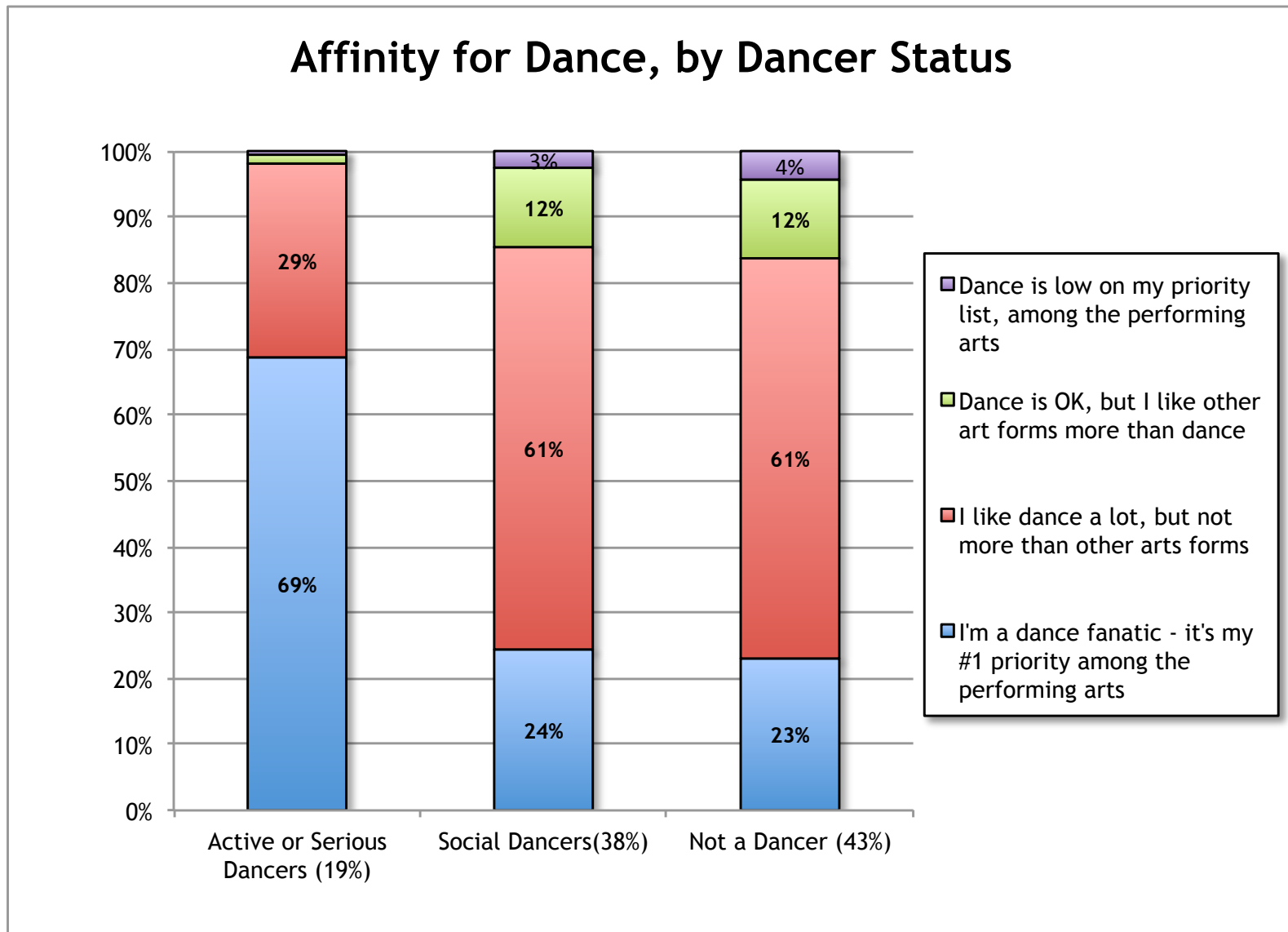
Key Finding: The majority of patrons dance themselves



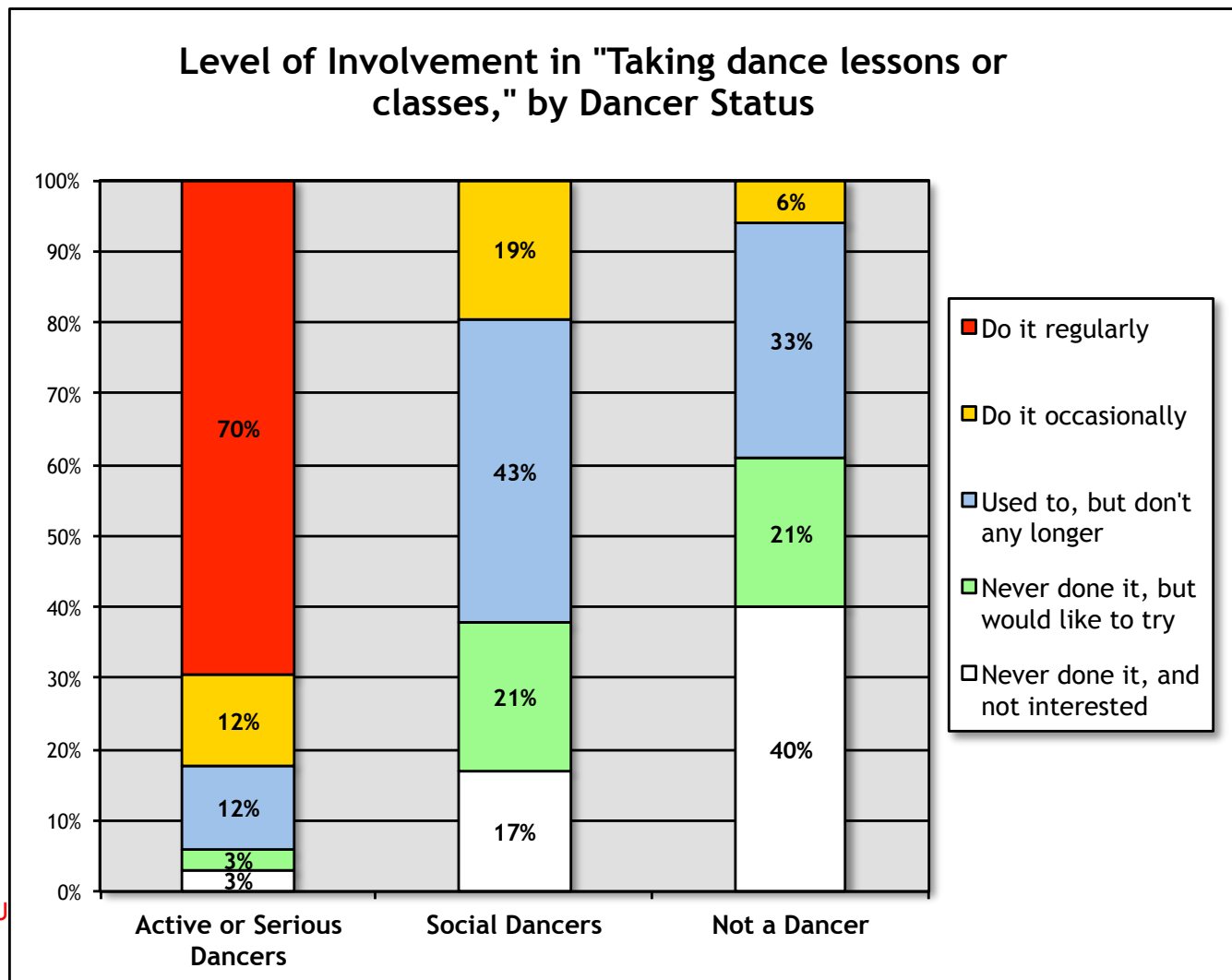
Six in ten patrons actively dance themselves, on some level



The more regularly a patron actively dances, the stronger her affinity for the art form



Even those who are not “Active or Serious Dancers” have, at some point in their lives, had some dance training

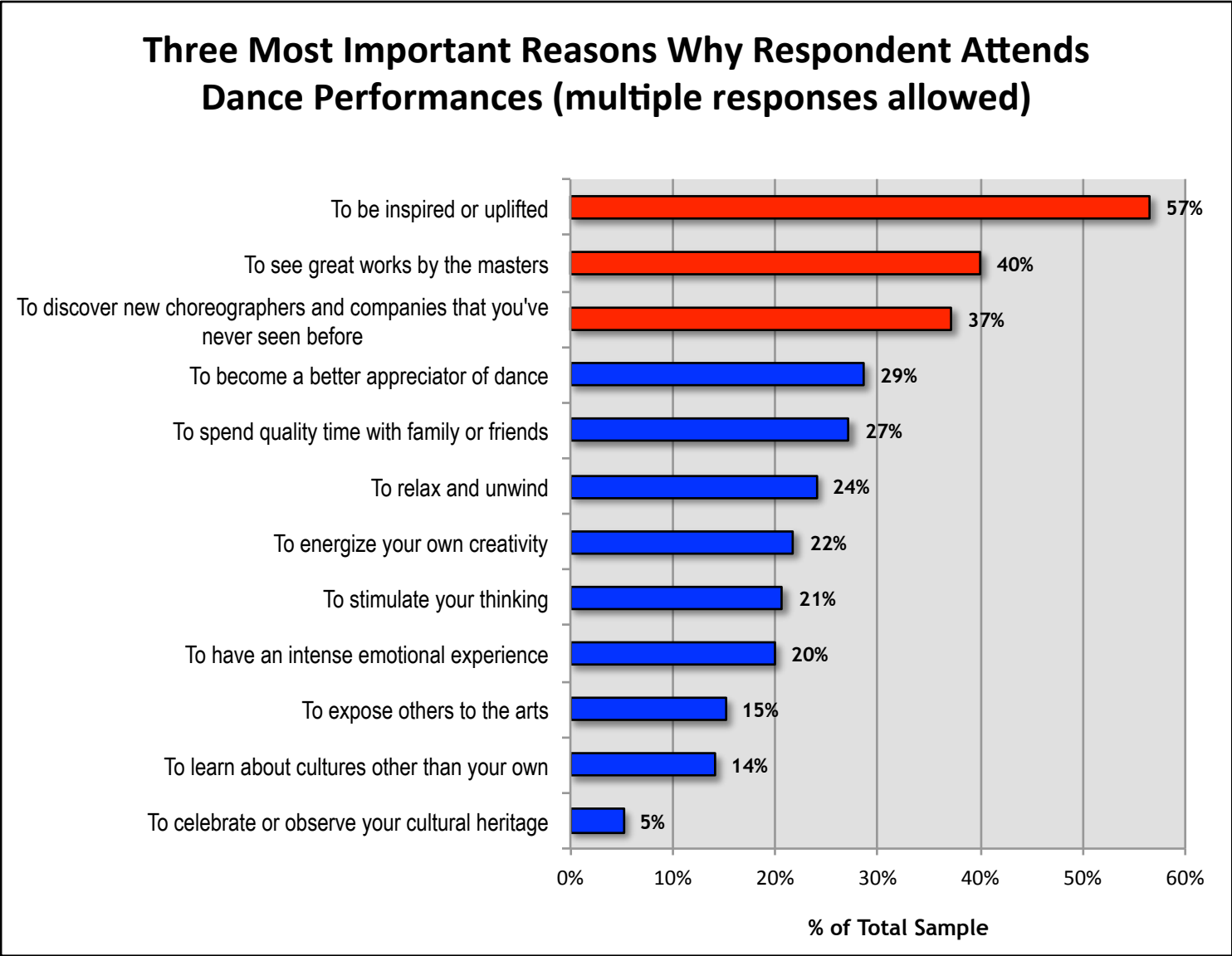




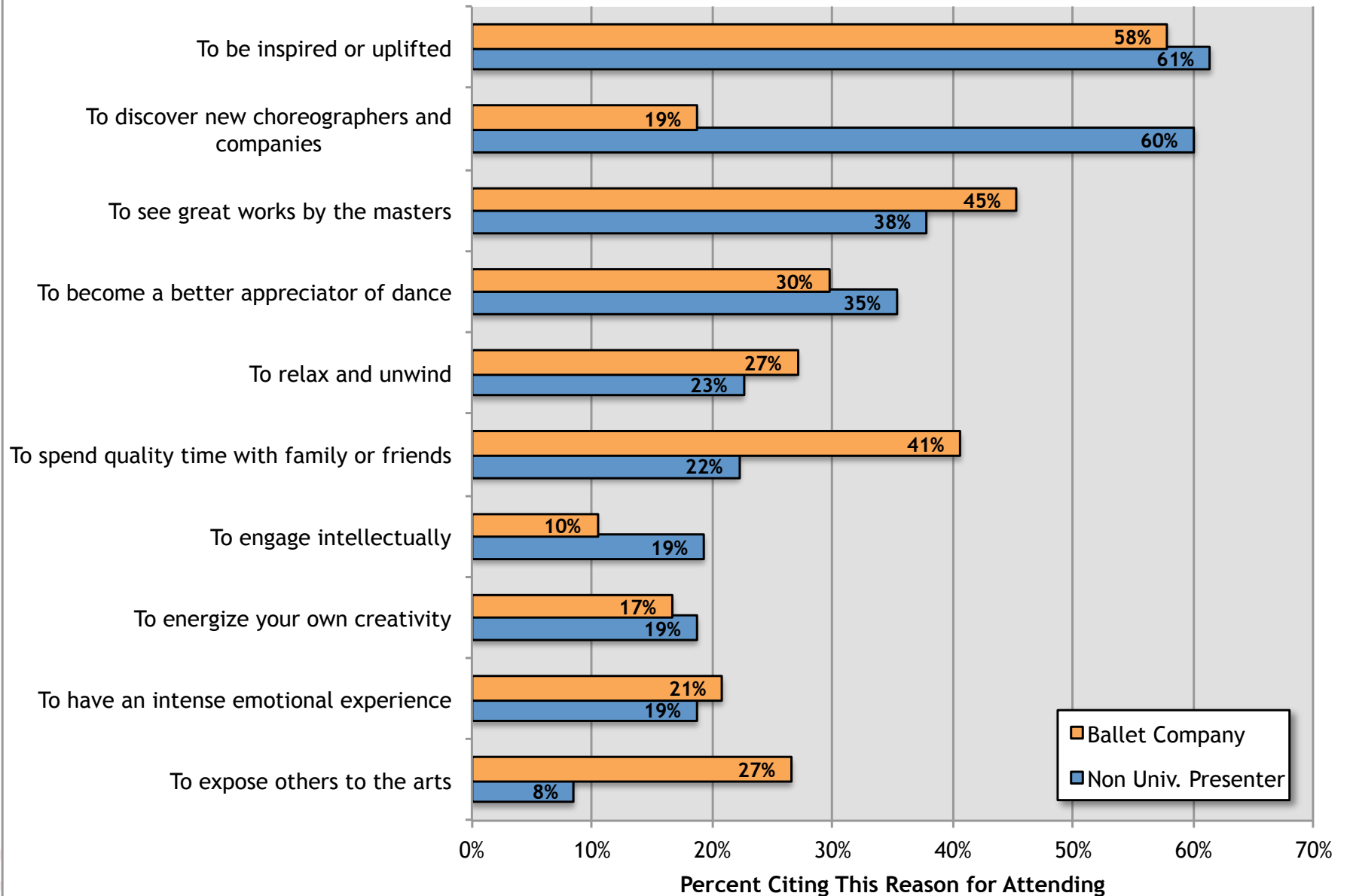
Key finding: The most common motivation for attending dance was “to be inspired or uplifted”



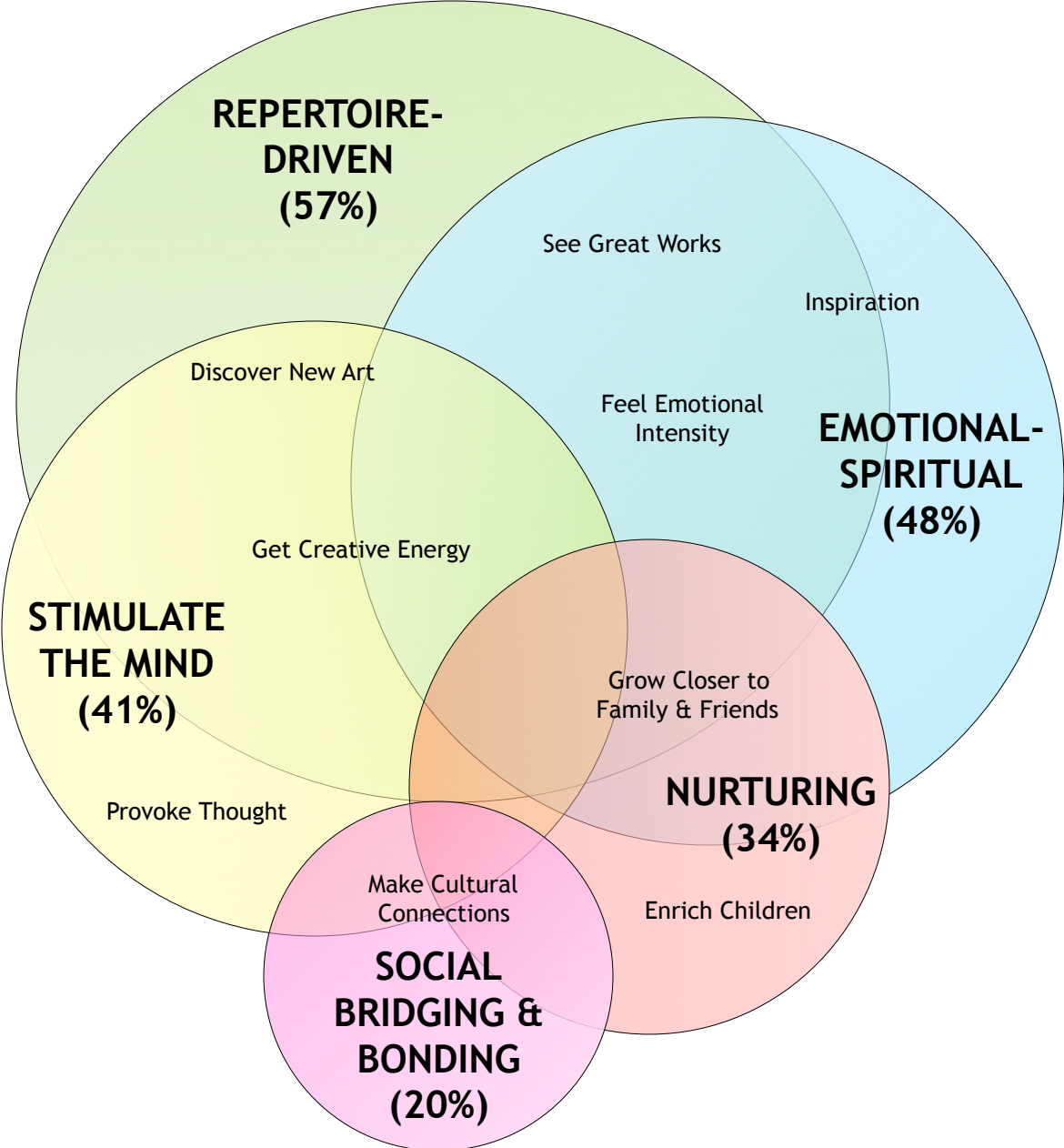
However, motivations for attending dance, overall, are more complex.



Three Most Important Reasons Why Respondent Attends Dance Performances, Two Organizations Compared



Approximate Prevalence of Motivational Factors



Four categories of engagement activities were investigated

- Pre-performance
- Activities that take place at or during performances
- Post-performance
- Engagement activities that are not tied to specific performances



Most Prevalent Engagement Activities

- Read program notes before curtain (85%)
- Discuss the performance with friends/family on the way home (78%)
- Read a review, afterwards (41%)
- Visit the organization's website beforehand (41%)
- Read a preview article (38%)
- Talk with others who are familiar with the company (35%)

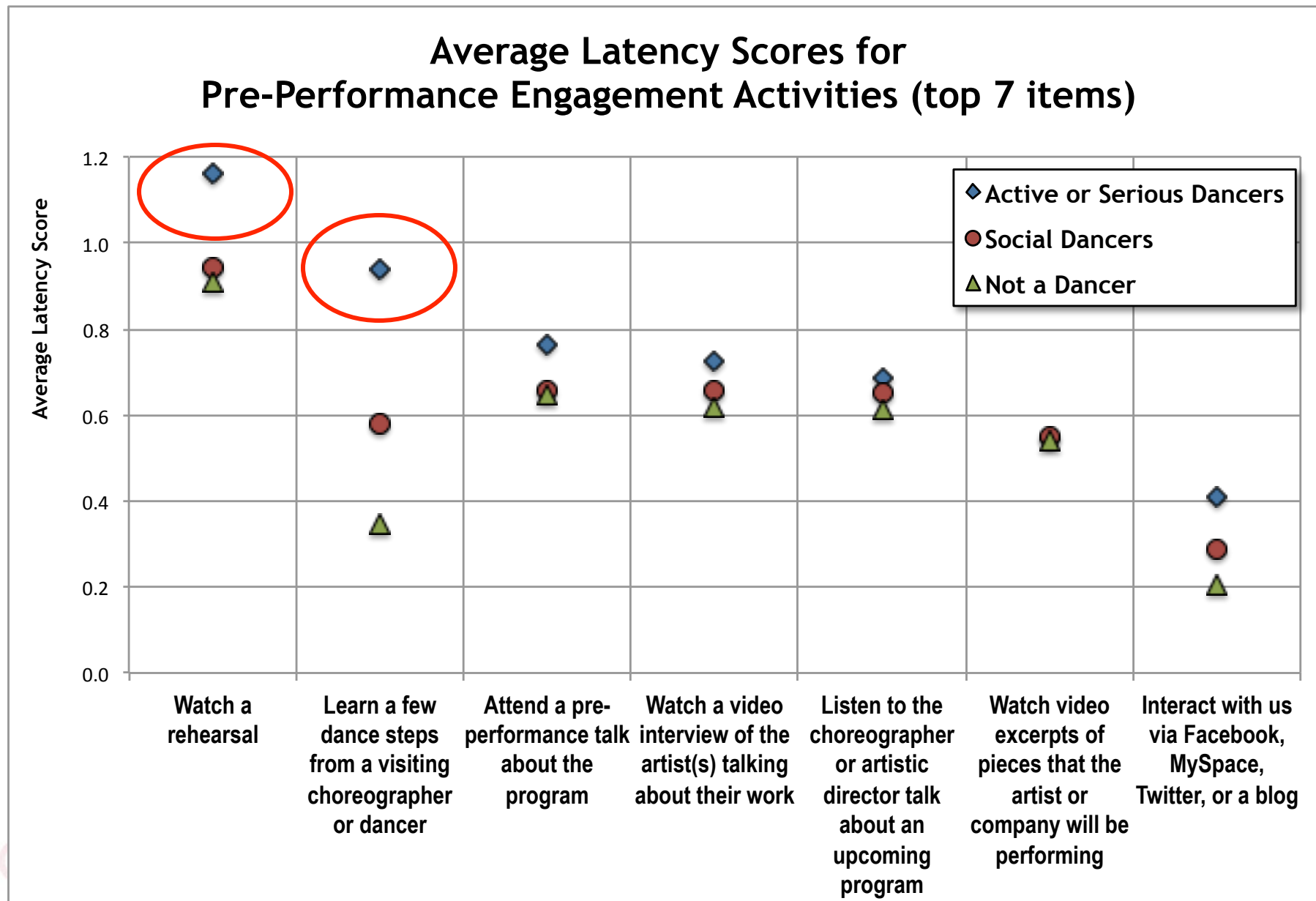




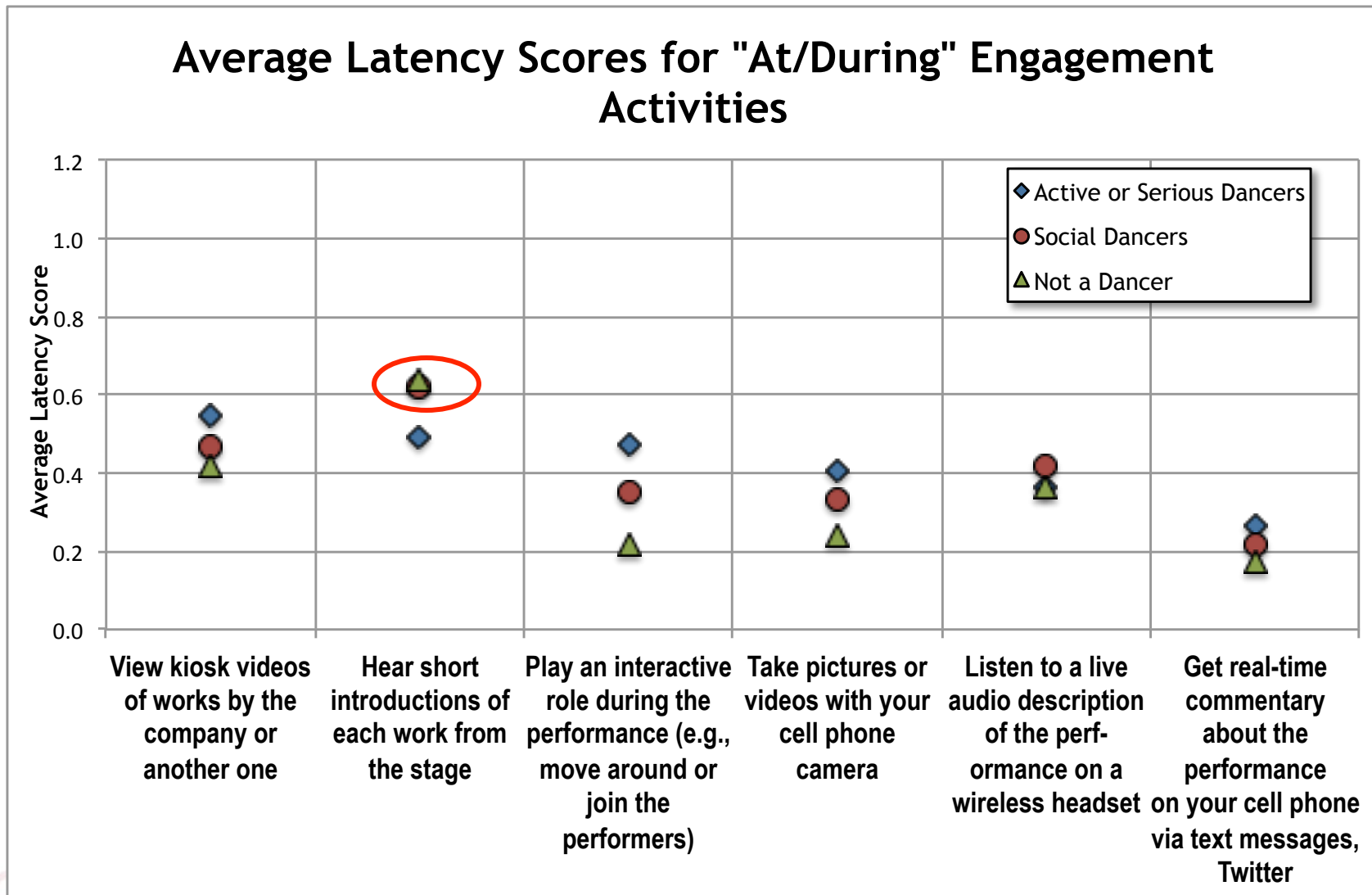
Key Finding: Latent interest is highest for context-building activities



“Watching rehearsals” and “Learning a few dance steps” garnered the high interest, esp. among dancers

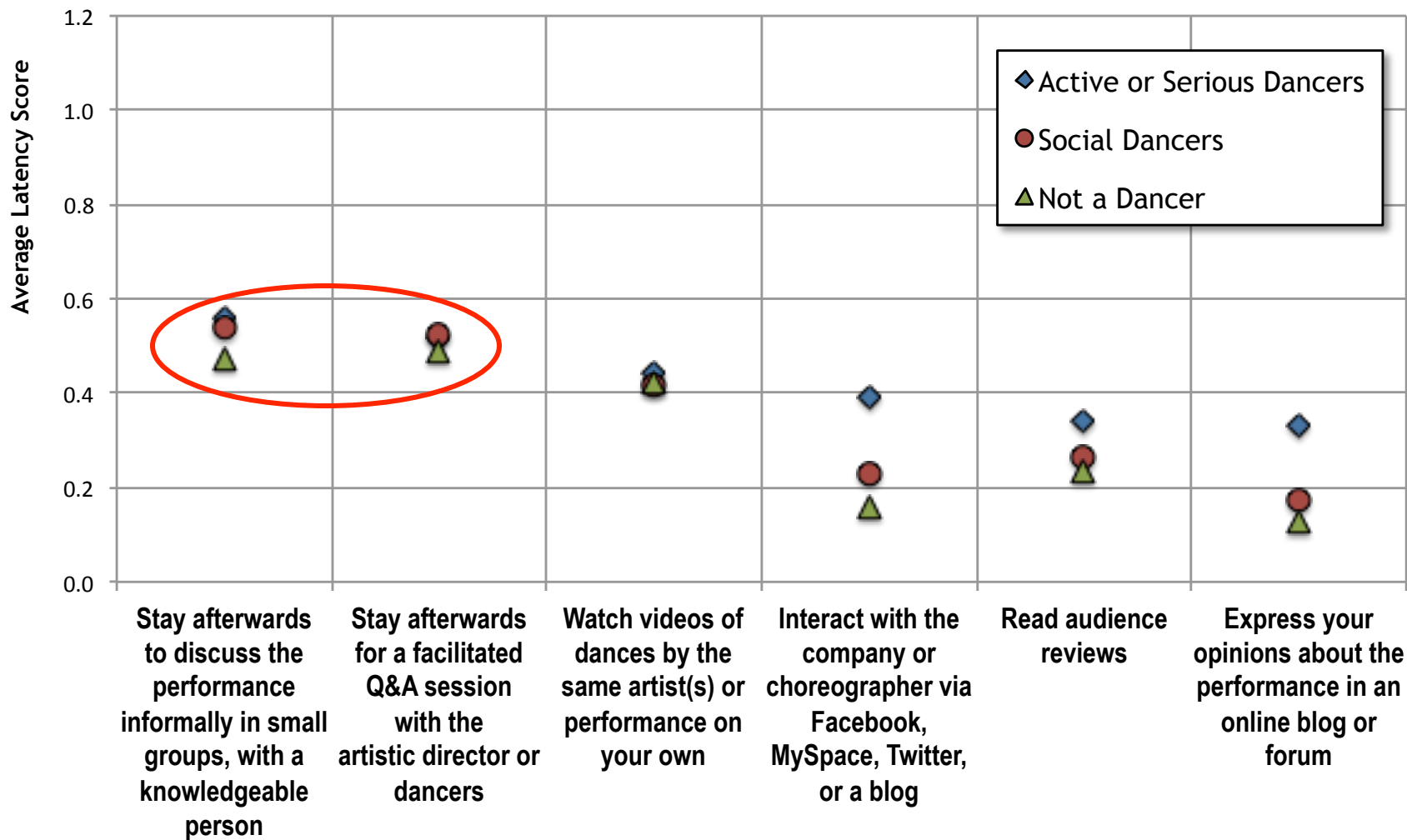


Patrons who are not dancers are more likely to want to hear spoken introductions



Patrons also want more post-performance discussion opportunities, both informal and formal

Average Latency Scores for Post-Performance Engagement Activities (top 7 items)



High-Potential Engagement Activities

- “Open rehearsals”
- Participatory dance opportunities
 - educational, contextual, social
- Pre-performance insight from the artist
 - video or live
- Spoken introductions at performances
- Informal discussion on the way home
- Mediated discussion
 - live or via the web

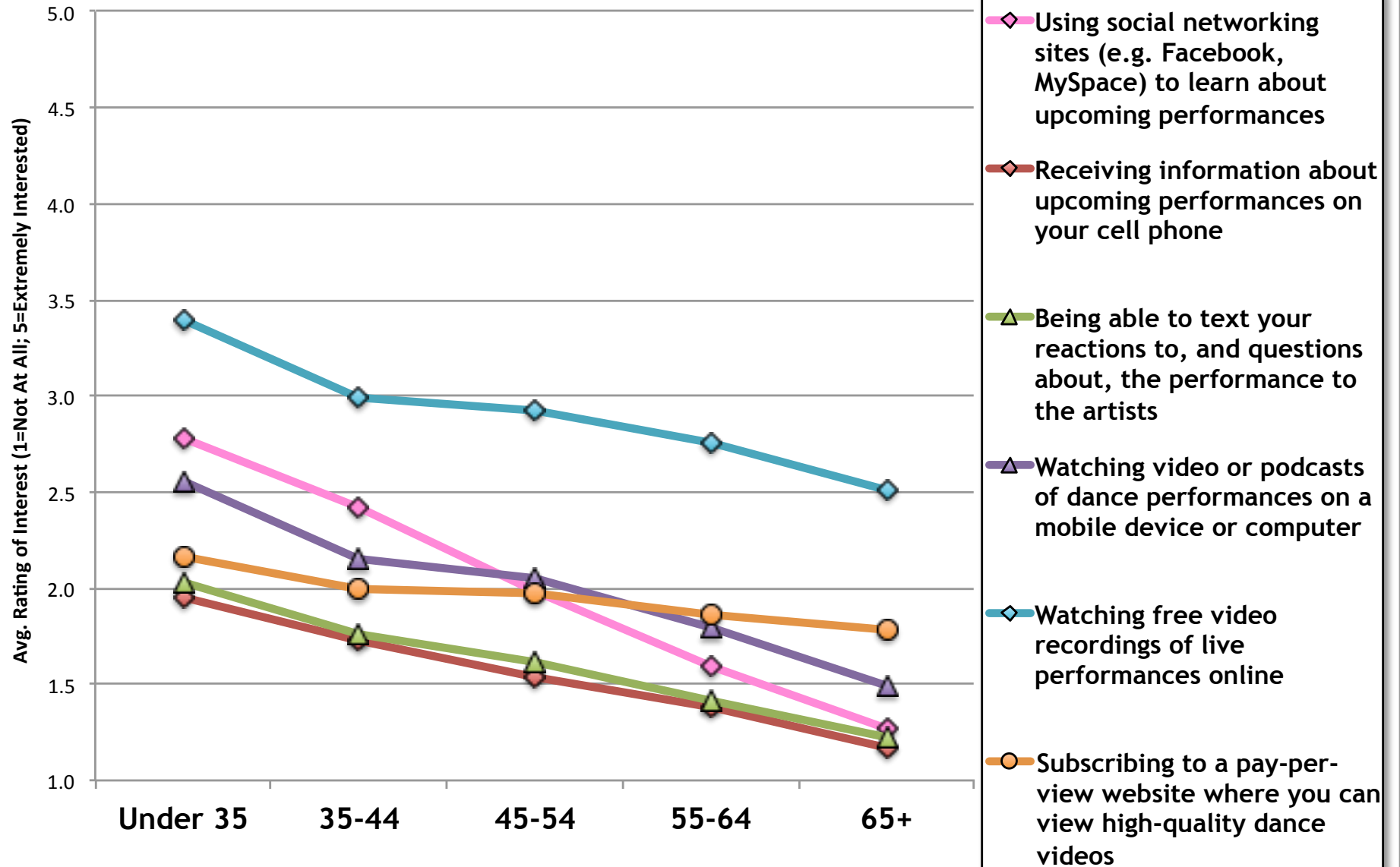




Key Finding: Younger buyers are much more interested in technology-based engagement, compared to older buyers.



Rating of Interest in Various Technological Forms of Engagement, by Age Cohort

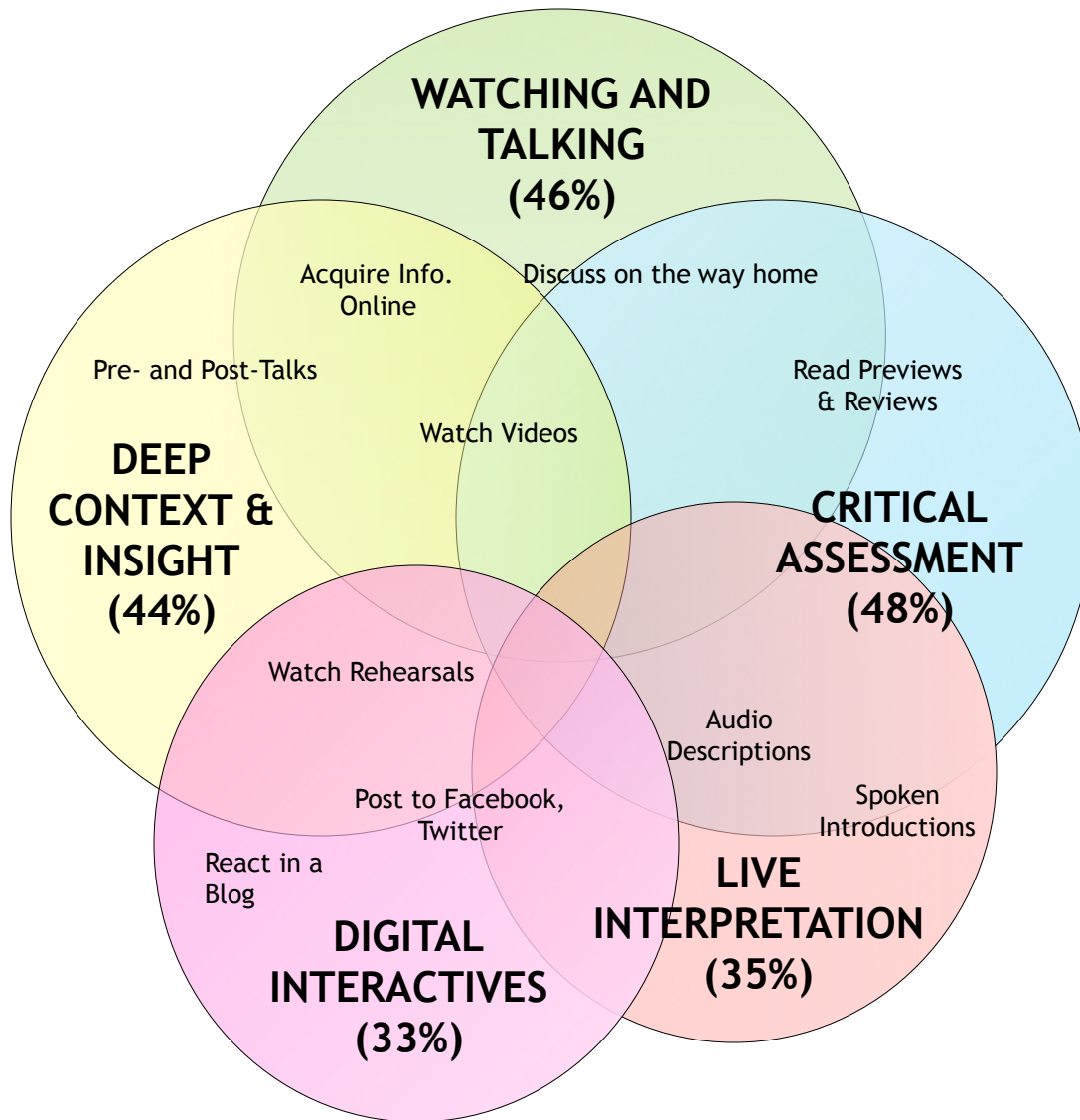




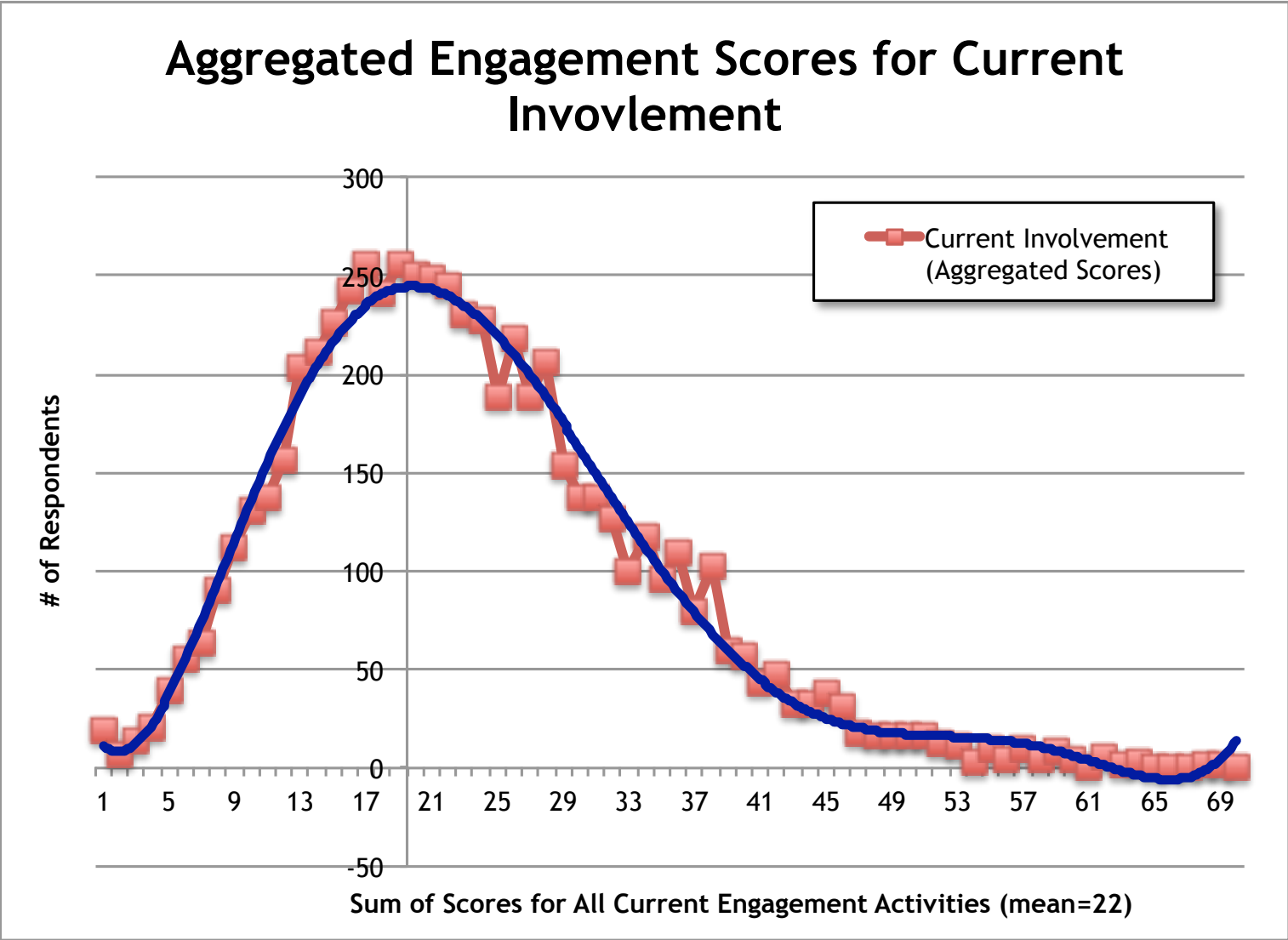
Big Picture Summary



Five underlying dimensions or “factors” of engagement were found.



Engaging the “Big Middle” is the real challenge



Recap of Key Findings

- Most of the audience can dance
 - What does this imply about how they might be engaged?
- Motivations for attending are complex, and imply a segmentation approach
- A major shift towards technological means of engagement is underway with younger audiences, but slow in coming



Recap of Key Findings

- Many audience members desire to be further engaged before, during, and after performances
 - How to facilitate informal discussion “on the way home”
 - How to open up rehearsals or otherwise allow for insight into the artistic process
 - Desire for more context leading up to performances
 - Spoken introductions - the “moment of curatorial insight”
 - Need to provide editorial content to help people make meaning, afterwards
- Engaging the “big middle” is the larger objective



Next Steps: Structured Uptake

- Distribute the study to fellow staff members and selected board members (either the full report, the webinar, or this presentation)



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Engaging Dance Audiences Research

A major component of the Engaging Dance Audiences project is a series of research studies. Each of the studies listed below are part of Dance/USA's effort to help the dance field explore methods of engaging audiences for dance.

National Survey of Dance Audiences

[Download the WolfBrown Report: How Dance Audiences Engage](#) | [Download the Appendix](#)
[Download Dance/USA's Overview of the National Survey of Dance Audiences](#)

Dance/USA commissioned WolfBrown to conduct a national survey of dance audiences; the first field-wide survey intended to answer the question, "How do dance audiences want to engage?" The survey was conducted in the summer of 2010 with the help of 42 partners who sent a standardized survey to their dance ticket-buyers. The survey garnered over 7,400 responses from dance audience members across the nation.

Dance/USA members can access the archived webinar on the National Survey of Dance Audiences. [Click here.](#)

A list of the 42 member dance presenters and producers joined this study as partners and sent the survey to their ticket-buyers is available by [clicking here.](#)

Research

- Snapshot of the Field
- Annual Data Survey
- National Company Roster

Research Initiatives

- Audiences**
- Nutcrackers
- Rough Waters Survey
- Dance Communities
- Services and Information Requests
- Research Resources

Next Steps: Structured Uptake

- Ask them to digest the findings independently and make a list of their “top five implications”
- Collect and distribute everyone’s key points
- Meet to negotiate the top findings for your organization
- Discuss how to evolve your current practice

