



Current public opinion toward federal funding for arts & culture in the United States

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Key results:

- A significant majority (37%) of adults in the U.S. ‘strongly disagree’ with President Trump’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture. In total, 63% of adults oppose the President’s proposal.
- Of those opposed to the proposal, 41% favor increasing government spending on arts and culture; 14% favor reducing the current level of government spending on arts and culture.
- In total, 19% of adults in the U.S. agree with President Trump’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture; 8% of adults ‘strongly agree’ with the proposal.
- Overall, 82% of U.S. adults have an opinion about Trump’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture. These adults report significantly higher rates of disagreement with Trump’s proposal within each region of the U.S.

On March 16, 2017, President Trump became the first U.S. president to propose eliminating federal funding for arts and culture by eliminating federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).¹ Since this date, numerous articles and op-edsⁱⁱ have been written in defense of these federal entities and the impact of their work, as well as in support of the proposed federal budget. To help empirically inform the current national discourse, we report the results of survey questions we recently fielded to gauge current public attitudes about the President’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture.

Data

Survey respondents were provided brief descriptions of the NEA, NEH, IMLS, and CPB; told the portion of the current federal budget that they comprise, which was about 0.24% of total federal discretionary spending, approximately \$973 million; and then asked two follow-up questions.² The descriptions were derived from language available from each entity’s website. The first question was adapted from the General Social Surveyⁱⁱⁱ and asked about the level of government spending:

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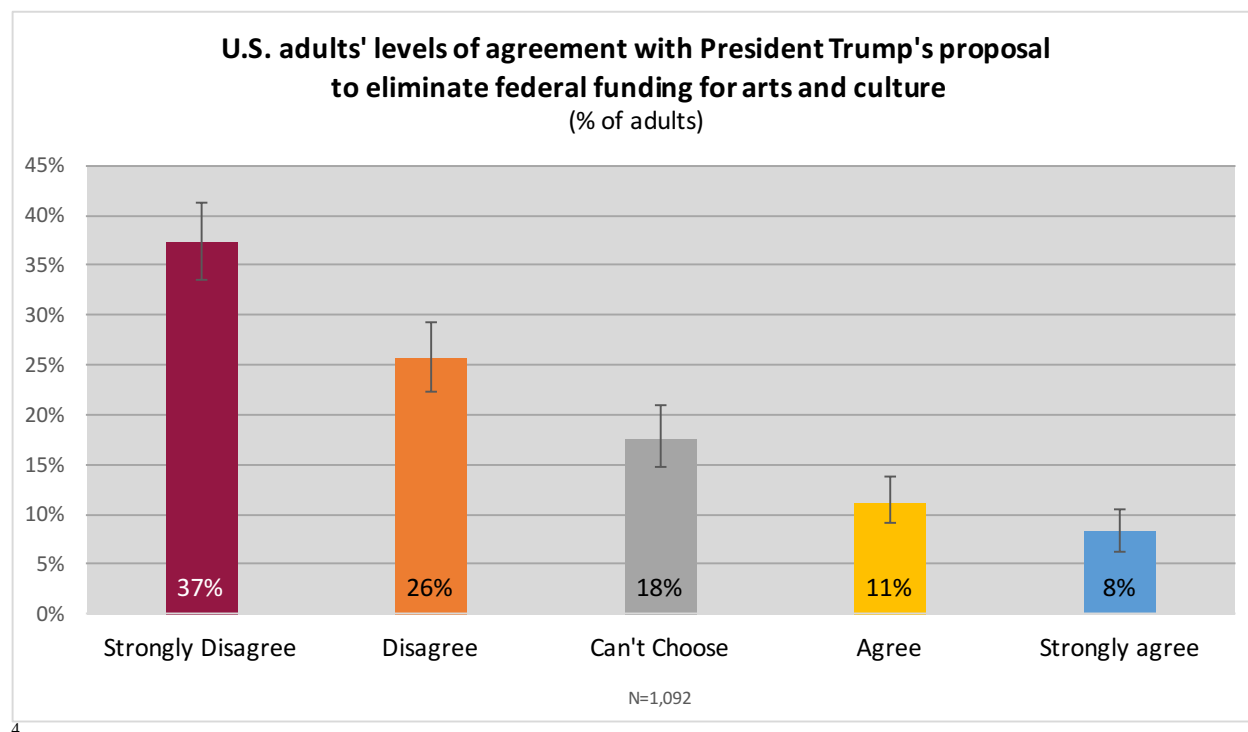
² The descriptions and questions are included in the Technical Appendix

“Please indicate whether you would like to see more or less government spending on culture and the arts. Remember that if you say "much more," it might require a tax increase to pay for it.” The second question asked specifically about the extent of the survey respondent’s agreement with the proposal to eliminate federal funding for these four entities: “Last week, President Trump proposed a federal budget that would reduce the budgets of these four organizations to \$0 and stop their work. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?”

We fielded the questions on the AmeriSpeak® Panel, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population, operated by NORC at the University of Chicago. The questions were fielded between March 23-27, 2017, in English and Spanish, on AmeriSpeak’s omnibus survey. Our sample is comprised of 1,110 adults (age 18 and older) from across the U.S.; 954 respondents answered the questions online, and 156 completed the questions by phone. The data are weighted using sampling weights provided by AmeriSpeak®, accounting for age, gender, 9-level Census divisions, education, and race/ethnicity. The overall margin of error is +/- 4.04.³

Public opinion of proposal to eliminate federal funding

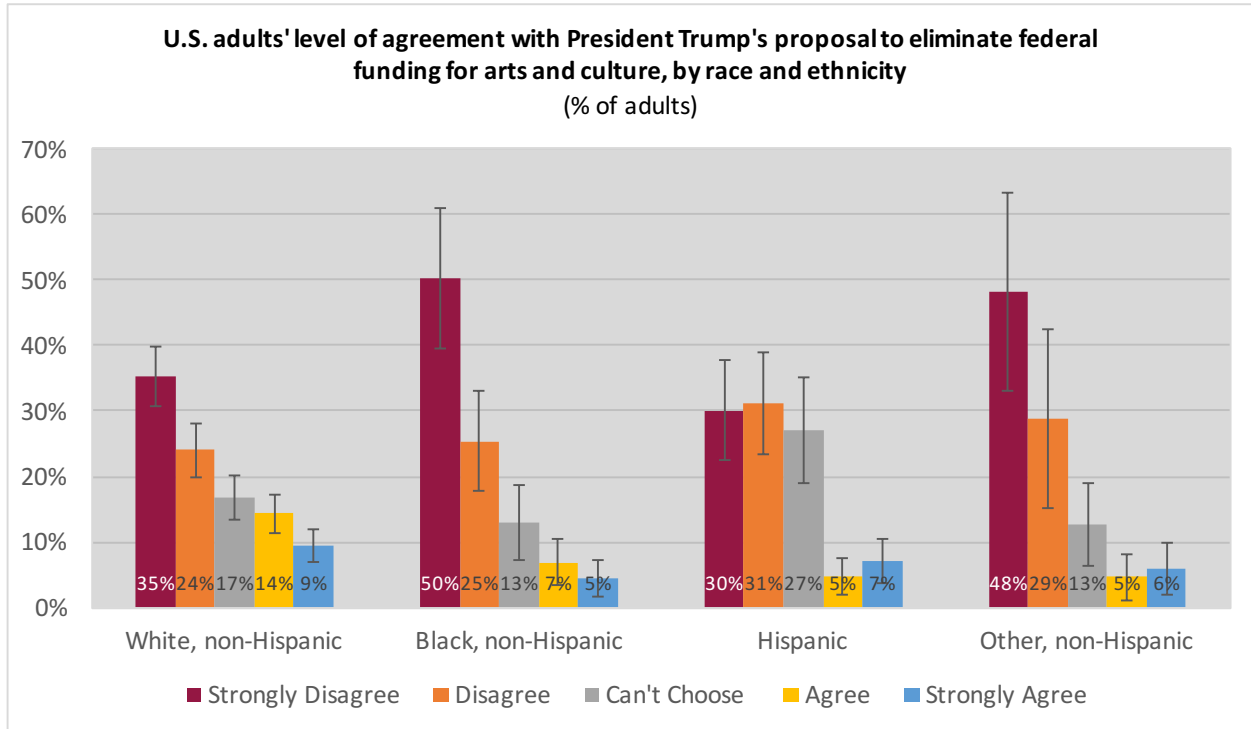
A significant majority (37%) of U.S. adults ‘strongly disagree’ with President Trump’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for the NEA, NEH, IMLS, and CPB. In total, 63% of adults disagree with the President’s proposal. A total of 19% of US adults agree with the proposal, with 8% of U.S. adults ‘strongly’ agreeing with the President’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture. Overall, 82% of adults had an opinion about President Trump’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture.



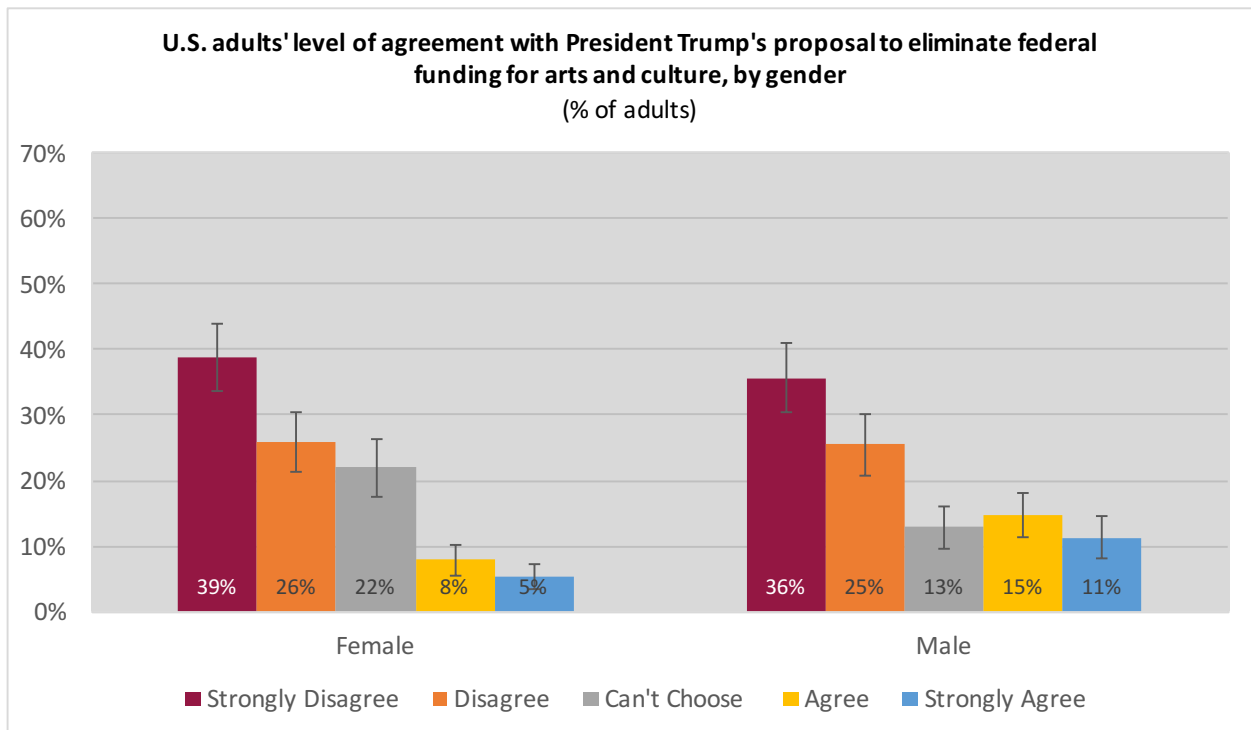
³ Additional technical documentation is available at <http://amerispeak.norc.org/research>

⁴ Error bars in charts represent 95%-confidence intervals for point estimates. Statistical significance is assessed at the 95%-confidence level throughout this brief, unless noted otherwise.

By Race & Ethnicity: A significantly greater portion of Black, non-Hispanic adults reported ‘strongly’ disagreeing with the proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture. A relatively large portion of Hispanic adults were undecided.

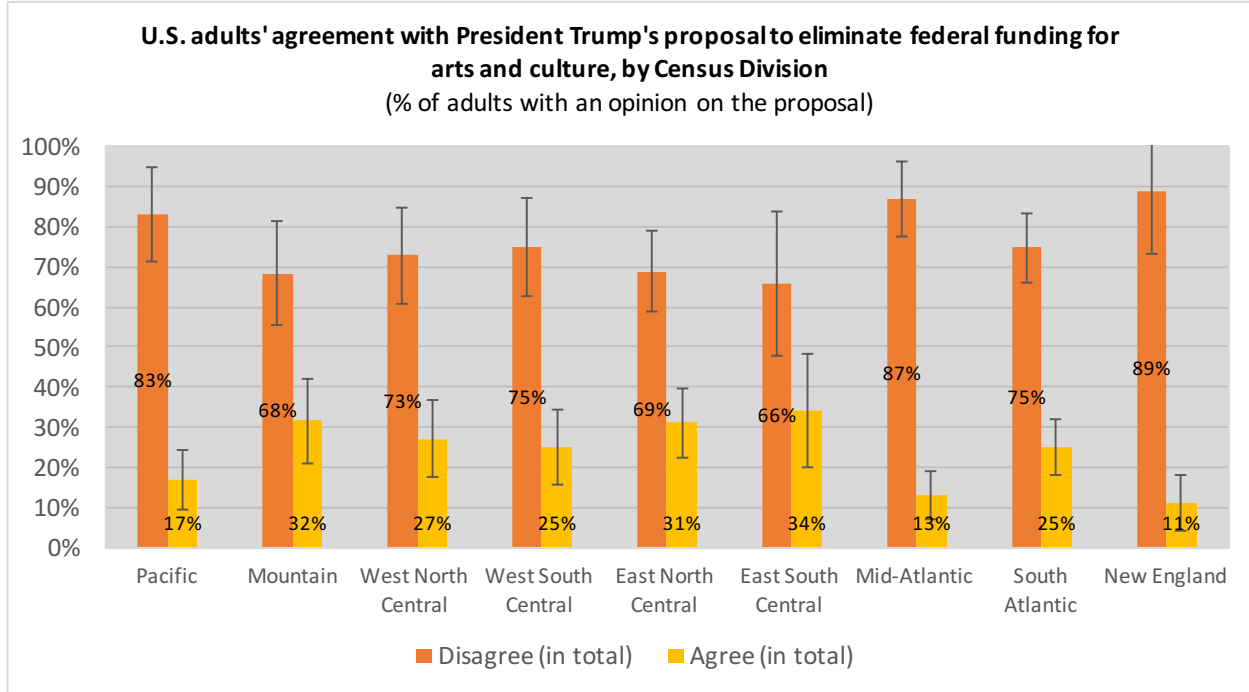


By Gender: Men are significantly more likely to agree with Trump’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture than are women. However, men and women disagree with Trump’s proposal at significantly higher rates than either group agrees with it.



By Region

Overall, 82% of U.S. adults have an opinion about President Trump’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture. Of adults with an opinion, a significantly greater portion disagrees with the proposal than agrees with it within each of nine regions, as defined by Census Bureau Divisions, across the U.S.^{iv}

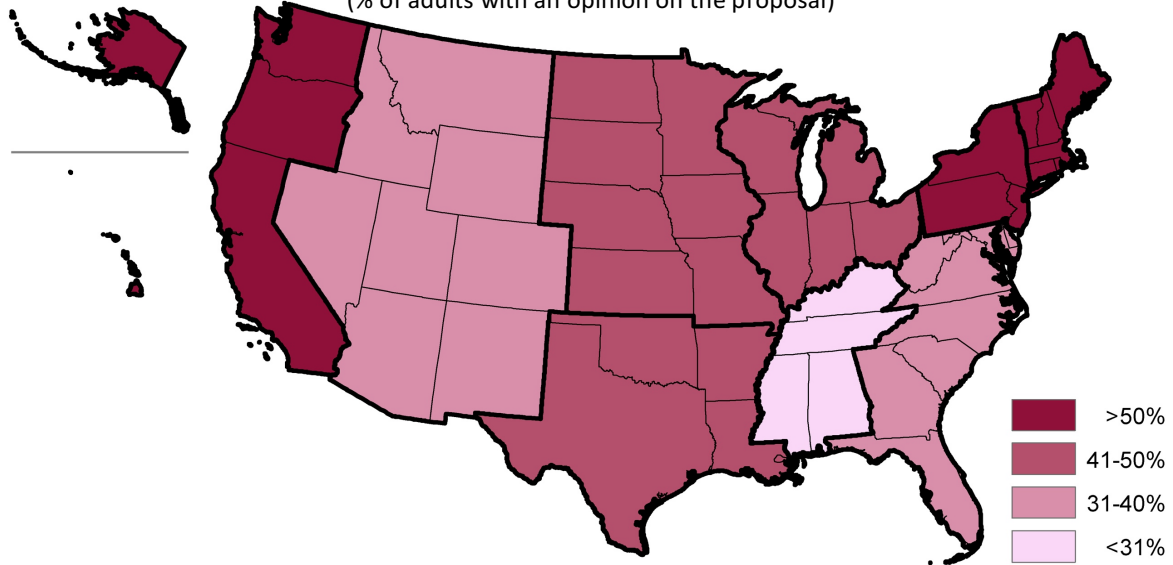


Note: ‘Disagree (in total)’ combines ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’; similarly, ‘Agree (in total)’ combines ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’

The data table provides further detail on the distribution of disagreement and agreement among adults with opinions about Trump’s proposal by region. Within the Pacific, Mid-Atlantic, and New England regions, the portions of adults who ‘strongly disagree’ with Trump’s proposal are significantly greater than those who agree (in total) with it. These data are illustrated in the heat map that follows.

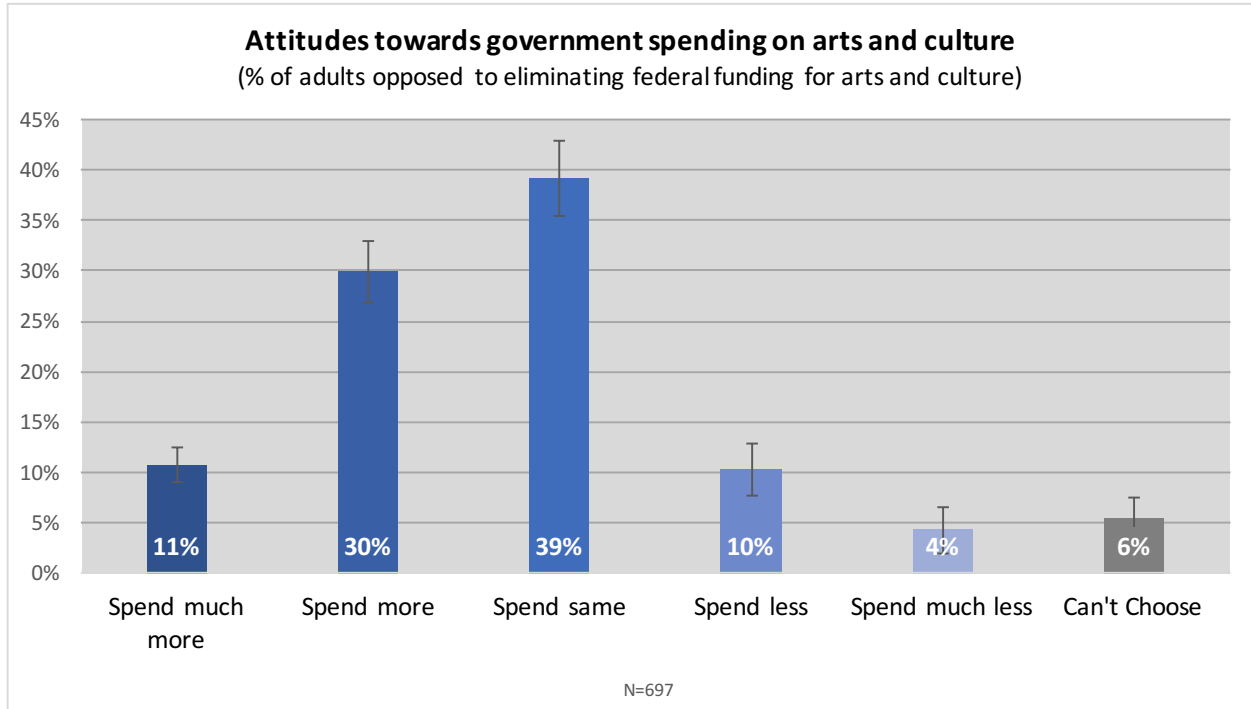
	Pacific	Mountain	West North Central	West South Central	East North Central	East South Central	Mid-Atlantic	South Atlantic	New England
	AK, CA, HI, OR, WA	AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY	IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD	AR, LA, OK, TX	IL, IN, MI, OH, WI	AL, KY, MS, TN	NJ, NY, PA	DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV	CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT
n=	102	87	93	93	172	58	90	182	41
Strongly Disagree	56%	38%	46%	42%	45%	27%	56%	36%	56%
Disagree	27%	30%	27%	32%	23%	39%	30%	39%	33%
Agree	7%	17%	17%	11%	23%	20%	7%	15%	7%
Strongly Agree	10%	15%	11%	15%	8%	14%	6%	10%	4%

Percentage of U.S. adults who 'strongly disagree' with President Trump's proposal to eliminate federal funding for arts and culture, by Census Division
(% of adults with an opinion on the proposal)



Level of Government Spending

Of adults opposed to eliminating federal funding for the NEA, NEH, IMLS, and CPB, 41% in total favored increasing the level of government support for arts and culture, 39% were in favor of maintaining the current level. Only 14% of adults opposed to eliminating federal funding were in favor of reducing the level of federal spending on arts and culture.



Conclusion

The survey results provide insights into adults' current attitudes towards federal funding of arts and culture in the U.S. Historically, limited information has been available on this topic.^v Given President Trump's proposal to eliminate funding for the NEA, NEH, IMLS, and CPB, we hope that these initial empirical findings can help inform the current national conversation about the proposed federal budget while further analyses of the data are underway.

Technical Appendix

Survey Questions: Survey respondents were given the following descriptions and questions:

The following descriptions are of four federal agencies and organizations that support culture and the arts:

- *The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) supports public radio, television, and related online and mobile services.*
- *The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) supports America's libraries and museums, including art, history, science and technology, children's museums, historical societies, tribal museums, planetariums, botanic gardens and zoos.*
- *The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) supports cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television, and radio stations with a focus on the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans.*
- *The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) promotes equal access to the arts in every community across America through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.*

Last year, the budgets of these four agencies and organizations totaled 0.24% (about one quarter of one percent) of total federal discretionary spending, which was about \$973 million.

A. *Please indicate whether you would like to see more or less government spending on culture and the arts. Remember that if you say "much more," it might require a tax increase to pay for it. (choose one); n=1,110*

- 94 Spend much more
- 233 Spend more
- 353 Spend same
- 176 Spend less
- 162 Spend much less
- 74 Can't choose
- (5 Don't Know)
- (12 Skipped on web)
- (1 Refused on phone)

B. *Last week, President Trump proposed a federal budget that would reduce the budgets of these four organizations to \$0 and stop their work. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal? (choose one); n=1,110*

- 89 Strongly Agree
- 127 Agree
- 175 Can't choose
- 277 Disagree
- 425 Strongly Disagree
- (6 Don't Know)
- (11 Skipped on web)

ⁱ Sopan, D. (2017, March 15, 2017). Trump Proposes Eliminating the Arts and Humanities Endowments. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/15/arts/nea-neh-endowments-trump.html?_r=1

ⁱⁱ For a few examples, see:

Huckabee, M. (2017, March 22, 2017). Mike Huckabee: A conservative plea for the National Endowment for the Arts. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mike-huckabee-a-conservative-plea-for-the-national-endowment-of-the-arts/2017/03/22/8d6d746a-0d94-11e7-9d5a-a83e627dc120_story.html?utm_term=.9cbfb2f17d12

Kennicott, P., & McGlone, P. (2017, March 16, 2017). Trump wants to cut the NEA and NEH. This is the worst-case scenario for arts groups. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/with-elimination-of-nea-and-neh-trumps-budget-is-worst-case-scenario-for-arts-groups/2017/03/15/5291645a-09bb-11e7-a15f-a58d4a988474_story.html?utm_term=.e452a832e06b

Scott, A. K. (2017, March 17, 2017). Trump's N.E.A. Budget Cut Would Put America First, Art Last. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/trumps-n-e-a-budget-cut-would-put-america-first-art-last>

Tracinski, R. (2017, March 22, 2017). Trump's Arts Funding Cuts Will Take Us Back To The 1950s. Good. *The Federalist*. Retrieved from <http://thefederalist.com/2017/03/22/trumps-arts-funding-cuts-will-take-us-back-1950s-good/>

ⁱⁱⁱ In 1985, 1990, 1996, 2006, and 2016 the General Social Survey (GSS) asked: "Listed below are various areas of government spending. Please indicate whether you would like to see more or less government spending in each area. Remember that if you say "much more," it might require a tax increase to pay for it." The GSS asked specifically about "culture and the arts." In 1998, the GSS asked a different series of questions about government funding at the national, state and local level. These data have been examined in other research, for example: Brooks, A. C. (2001). Who opposes government arts funding? *Public Choice*, 108(3), 355-367. doi:10.1023/A:1017544928115

^{iv} The difference in reported rates of disagreement and agreement with Trump's proposal for East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN) is significant at the 90%-confidence level; the difference within each other region is significant at the 95%-confidence level.

^v DiMaggio, P. and B. Pettit (1998), Surveys of Public Attitudes toward the Arts: What Surveys Tell Us about the Arts' Political Trials, *GIA Newsletter*, (9)2 (Fall 1998). Retrieved from: <http://www.giarts.org/article/surveys-public-attitudes-toward-arts>