

No Guarantees



Broadway's Next Act: Gen Zs and Millennials

The next generations of theatergoers want the OG Broadway experience, not a TikToked-down version. The secret to capturing their attention? Be part of the conversation.

NO GUARANTEES
SPRING 2024



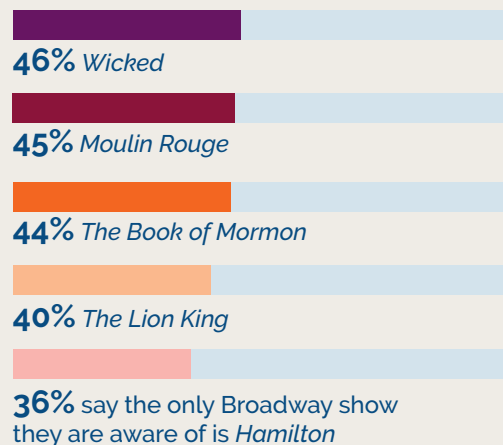
OFF-BROADWAY...LITERALLY

There are more than 40 shows currently playing on Broadway but ask a twentysomething to name a few and they'll be hard pressed to come up with more than a handful. "I'm sure if I heard some show titles, they'd ring a bell," Max, 20, of New York, NY told us. "But honestly, off the top of my head, it's just *Hamilton*." In fact, 61% percent of Gen Zs and Millennials say they'd be challenged to think of more than a few Broadway shows, and 36%—including 45% of Max's generation, Gen Z—agree, "The only Broadway show I know is *Hamilton*." Beyond not knowing the names of most shows, respondents had a hard time gaging how many shows there were. 84% guessed there are 20 or fewer shows currently on Broadway—half as many as there actually are—and nearly half of respondents (46%) guessed the show count to be five or fewer. Also surprising: less than half knew of Broadway's longest running titles, including *Wicked* (46% were familiar), *Moulin Rouge* (45%), *The Book of Mormon* (44%), and *The Lion King* (40%). Fewer than 30% were familiar with recent award-winners like *Six*. The next generation is 'off Broadway' because Broadway is off their radar.

This is particularly notable considering that three-quarters of respondents in this survey live in the tri-state area, with more than one-third (373) in New York. For some tri-state residents and native New Yorkers, it came as a surprise that they weren't more knowledgeable. "I probably should know more," Adriana, 27, of Stamford, CT, admitted. Ali, 30, an LA-based entertainment attorney who was raised in Manhattan, was able to name ten shows, including *South Pacific*, *Hamilton*, and *Legally Blonde*, but also reflected, "It's interesting. It's a harder exercise than I would have thought." For those outside of the tri-state area, Broadway seems like an island in the world of live entertainment. "I hadn't thought about comparing Broadway to a concert or to an athletic event or anything like that," Ana, 30, of Chicago, IL, said, when we asked her about live theater in context of other live entertainment events. "I guess anytime I think about Broadway, I think of it on its own, like a separate bubble."

Less than half of Gen Zs and Millennials are familiar with Broadway's most popular titles

% familiar with:

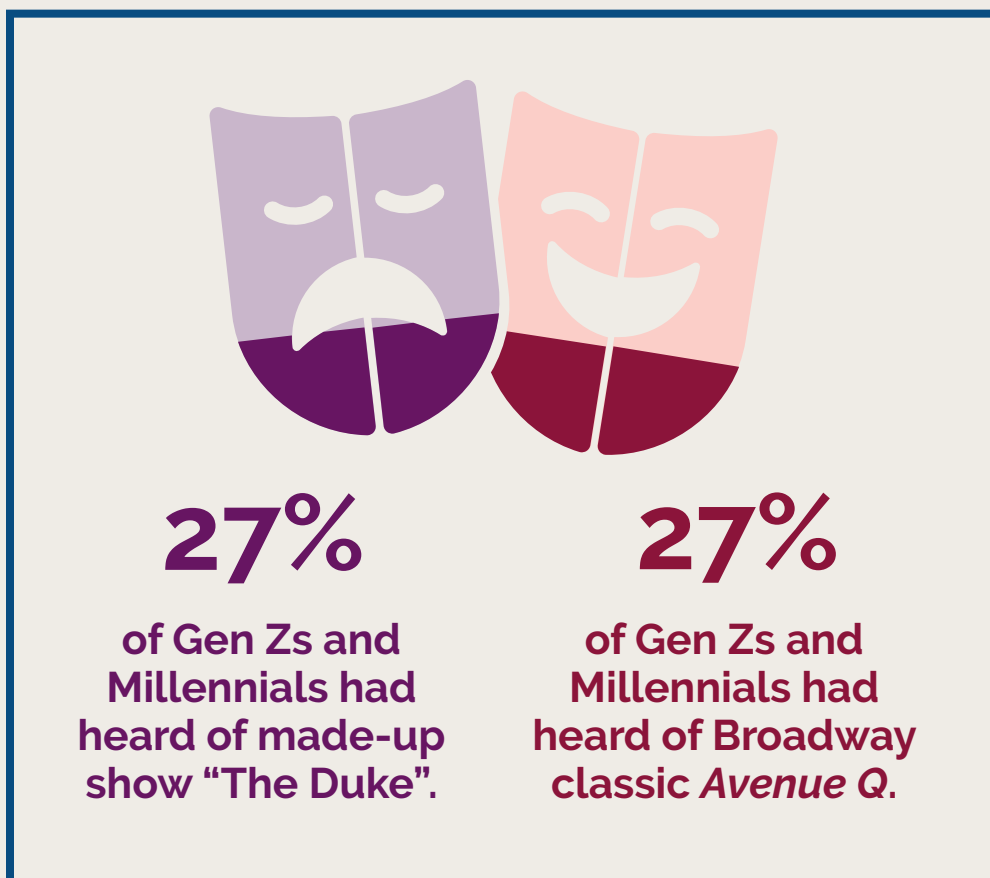


"Anytime I think about Broadway, I think of it in its own separate bubble."

— Ana, 30, Chicago, IL

Gen Zs and Millennials were more aware of shows that never existed than some of the most recent Tony Award winners for Best Musical.

Not only was there confusion about what was playing on Broadway currently, but there was also confusion about what has played on Broadway, ever. Given a mix of actual shows and fictional ones (made up for the purposes of this survey), respondents had a difficult time determining which was which. Fifty-eight percent of Gen Zs and Millennials reported being familiar with made-up shows such as "The Duke" (27% had heard of it) and "Whatever Happened to Julia Child?" (one-quarter were familiar), about the same percentage as those who knew of classics like Avenue Q (27%). In total, young people were more aware of shows that never existed than some of the most celebrated, award-winning productions, like *Kimberley Akimbo* and *Hadestown*.





GHOSTED BY BROADWAY

It would be easy to assume live theater is simply not relevant among younger generations who were born into a world of bingeable content and are known for having TikTok attention spans. But from those we spoke with and surveyed, this wasn't the case. What we found was that young people aren't uninterested in live theater, they're just unaware of it. "I never really see any Broadway promotion on my social media accounts," Lily, a USC senior originally from Connecticut, told us. Adriana echoed Lily: "I feel like I don't see as much about theater as I should," noting that she sees a lot of other live entertainment in New York promoted, like comedy shows. Even respondents who were bona fide theater enthusiasts, like Ari, 24, of Washington, D.C., felt like Broadway's marketing wasn't reaching them. "Maybe my algorithm isn't catching me." Ari may be onto something: 37% of Gen Zs and Millennials say they can't remember ever seeing Broadway or live theater promoted on their social feeds. Considering 71% of young people say they find out about "pretty much everything" on social media, this is a clear miss. But also, perhaps, an easy fix. When asked whether social media could help Broadway gain momentum among younger audiences, or whether even social media wasn't enough to increase Broadway's appeal, three-quarters (73%) said the former. Put another way, live theater isn't dead; it's just ghosted the youth.

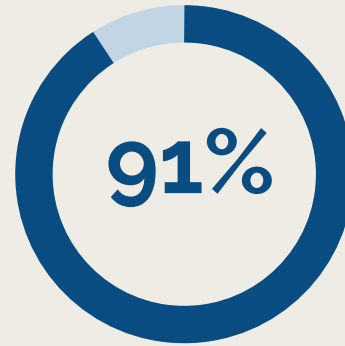


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The solution for dialing up Broadway's profile among younger generations could be even simpler than standing out on social media. One-in-five respondents (21%) said the solution is to "Just advertise!" (see Top Tips to Resonate with the Next Generations). Crysta, a 30-year-old theater enthusiast who straddles Jersey City, NJ, and Philadelphia, PA, says she proactively has to "dig" for information about what's playing. "The fact that I have to go online and say, "Oh, what's playing now?" is odd. The marketing is not reaching me." Ari, who feels Broadway is missing his algorithm, says advertising doesn't necessarily need to be on TikTok to be effective—ads on the metro catch his attention, too. David, 37, of Jersey City, NJ, regularly checks out Timeout New York to learn about live entertainment, and Alison, 39, of Brooklyn, NY, subscribes to New York Magazine. She also likes OG digital advertising. "I always open email newsletters. I'm on the email list for Alamo Drafthouse movie theater, and Brooklyn Museum. It's a really effective way to communicate with younger people. I'm sure these newsletters exist for Broadway. I just don't know about them."



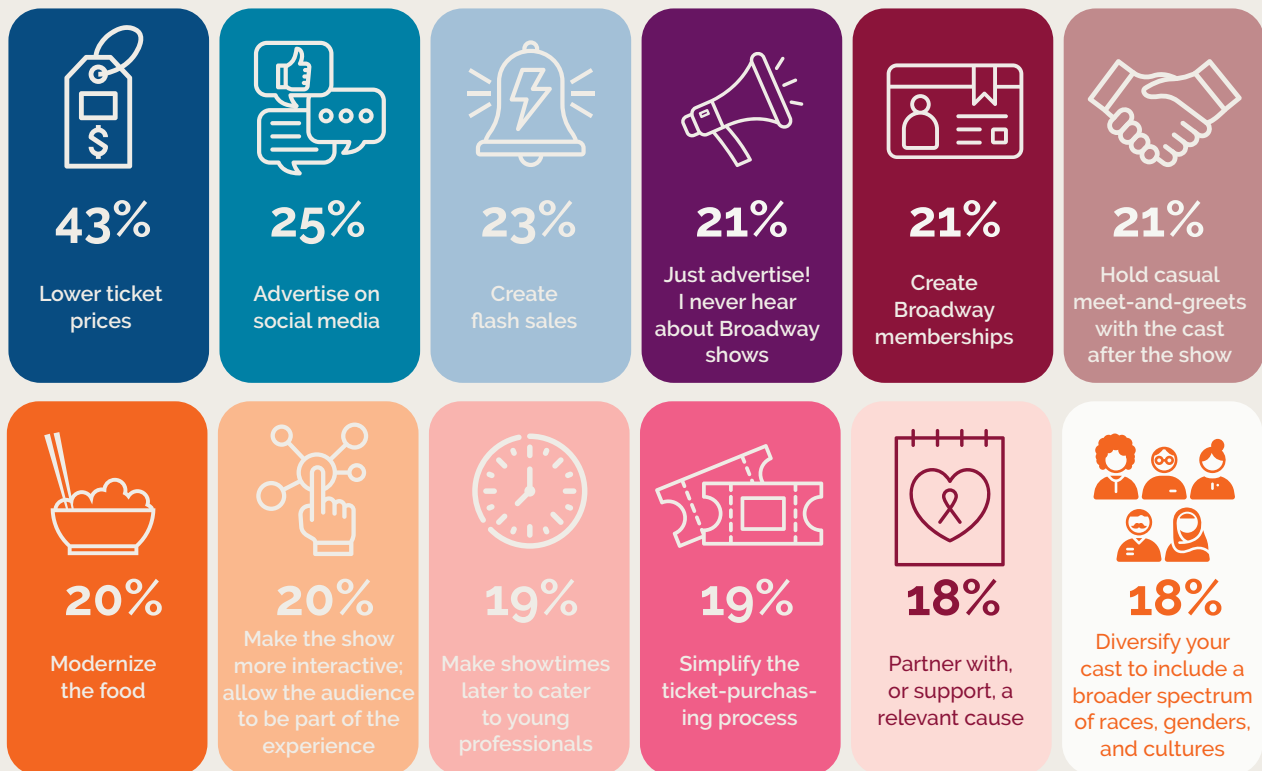
In a nod to the power of being top-of-mind, 91% of those we surveyed said taking this survey alone piqued their interest in Broadway, with 26% who said it made them want to go to a Broadway show and 22% who said it made them interested in learning more about Broadway. Others said it made them want to talk to their friends about Broadway, made them more aware of Broadway, and made them wonder why they didn't think about Broadway more often. Only 9% said it didn't sway their opinion one way or the other. As Lily told us, "It's funny because this interview put Broadway in my mind and then I actually got my dad and I tickets to see a play on Broadway for Christmas."



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Top Tips to Resonate with the Next Generation

We proposed 30+ ideas to young people and asked which ones, if any, would make Broadway more relevant to them. The vast majority (91%) said there was at least one thing that could be done to help Broadway's cause. While lowering ticket prices topped respondents' lists, a majority (57%) chose an idea outside of ticket pricing. Here are their top recommendations.





BROADWAY'S BOTTOM LINE

The cost of going to a Broadway show was naturally on young people's minds, particularly during these economically challenging times. Many we spoke with assumed going to a show would be a \$500+ experience (\$200 X 2 tickets + \$100 dinner). "I think \$150 for Broadway tickets would be reasonable," Lily told us, saying that she recently spent \$200 on tickets to a concert at the Hollywood Bowl. Ana said she'd be willing to spend \$200 on a Broadway ticket, as did David, and Alison. Deb would pay \$300 for a well-known show like Hamilton, and Crysta said, for good seats, she'd spend upwards of \$600. In reality, the average ticket price for a Broadway show in 2023 was only \$123, with the cheapest tickets being \$49 and the most expensive being \$649. Overall, there's a misconception that Broadway tickets are about 50% more expensive than they actually are (\$200 vs. \$123).

Some of the fear of being priced out of Broadway comes from an increase in ticket prices for live events more broadly. As concert prices soared this summer (on average, Beyonce tickets were \$323 and Taylor Swift tickets went for \$1,088.56 a pop, according to CNBC), so too did young people's expectations of what other live events cost. "A lot of concerts are now \$250 per ticket," Alison noted. Also at play is an assumption that everything in the Big Apple just costs more: "I walk into New York City and, all of a sudden, I lose \$300," Ari joked. But arguably, the main reason Gen Zs and Millennials assume Broadway isn't in their budget is because they simply don't know. After all, if young people aren't aware of which shows are playing, it's safe to assume they also don't know what tickets to these shows cost. The bottom line? There's an opportunity for the industry to debunk misconceptions around ticket prices. The good news is that, once audiences experience Broadway, price seems to become less of an issue: A full 90% of Gen Zs and Millennials who have been to a Broadway show say it was worth the price.



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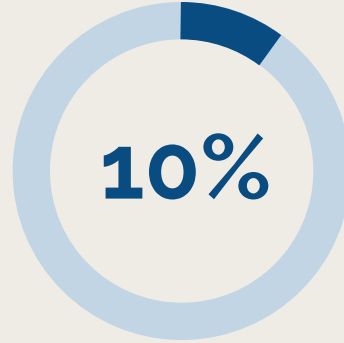


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SOCIAL COMMENTARY

One thing notably absent from young people's wish lists for what Broadway could do better? TikTok-ifying the theater experience. While nearly all respondents agreed advertising on Instagram and TikTok is a no-brainer, very few wanted Broadway to become over-influenced by social media. In fact, live entertainment is a much-appreciated escape from an increasingly digital world, not to mention a chance to socialize face to face. 85% agree, "Live entertainment is a place for me to unplug and tune into IRL" and 83% say a big benefit of live events is socializing with friends, something valued even more highly post-pandemic. "I think I got numb during COVID," Ali told us. "I've missed being out and about." Furthermore, 78% agree that live entertainment has become more powerful as the world has become more digital. To this point, when it comes to having phones in theaters, the verdict was a unanimous 'no.' Only 10% of respondents said having access to phones and social media during shows would improve their experience and two-thirds (66%) go as far as to say, "Social media has ruined live entertainment."



Only 10% of Gen Zs and Millennials said having access to phones and social media during Broadway shows and live theater would improve their experience.

79% agree,

"The pandemic has made me appreciate live entertainment more than ever before."

Gen Zs and Millennials not only see Broadway shows as an escape from the digital world, but they also see it as a way to return to the more classic entertainment experiences from yesteryear that have become increasingly rare. More than three-quarters of respondents (77%) would prefer for Broadway to "not change a thing" than for it to "change everything" (23%), and 76% don't feel that Broadway is losing relevance among younger generations. In fact, nearly half (42%) say that it's poised to make a comeback. This finding syncs up with a growing nostalgia among young people for experiences that predate the digital era and signify simpler times.

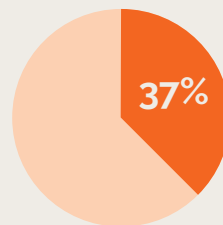
As evidence of this, we tested several, specific ideas on how Broadway could innovate with young audiences in mind. Coming in dead last was “Influential Broadway,” described as adding more social media-friendly aspects to shows, such as Instagrammable moments, working with influencers, and having access to phones and social media during shows. Tellingly, one idea that rose to the top of the list was “Interactive Shows”— a post-show Q&A with directors or cast, opportunities for the audience to be part of the show, or a cocktail after the show—signaling that audiences are eager to have more face-to-face, human interaction. Backing this up, 83% of Gen Zs and Millennials say a big reason they go to live entertainment is to socialize. According to Adriana, young people are looking for more ways to intersect IRL. “A cocktail with tiny bites would totally change the game for [Broadway]. It’s such a good way to meet people who are like-minded. And we don’t have that anymore. It’s so hard to build a community.”

This isn’t to say that young people’s shorter attention spans aren’t worth the industry accounting for. “I have noticed a really bad skydive into attention problems with social media,” Adriana explained. “I think I’d be able to sit [through a Broadway show] but making sure you’re good for that long is something that needs to be planned for. I would just feel jittery or uneasy, which is so depressing to say.” Like Adriana, 61% of Gen Zs and Millennials say it’s hard for them to go one hour without checking their phones and 56% say they are addicted to social media. But being fully present is the type of digital intervention younger generations are looking for. One solution? More intermissions. When given the options of shorter shows, longer shows, or longer shows with more breaks, young people chose the latter, saying they’d prefer more opportunities to socialize, grab food, and, yes, check their phones (see “Breaking Up Broadway”).

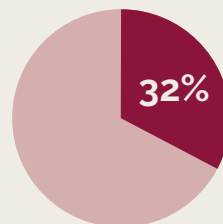
Breaking Up Broadway

Young people want to break up live theater experiences so they can socialize, check their phones, eat, and generally have a 360 experience that surrounds the performance.

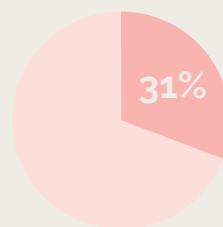
Q: Which of the following would you prefer?



I wish Broadway experiences were longer; I'd prefer a show with **more intermissions**



I wish Broadway shows were longer; I'd prefer a **longer performance**



I wish Broadway shows were shorter; I'd prefer a show with **no intermissions**



BROADWAY CURIOUS

One powerful statistic about Broadway's potential among young audiences is that two-thirds (67%) of Gen Zs and Millennials describe themselves as "Broadway-curious: I'd like to learn more about Broadway" rather than "Broadway-agnostic: I'm not interested in learning more" (33%). There is a real opportunity to convert the Broadway-curious into regular theatergoers by making live theater more accessible and less intimidating. Take prospective tourist Deb, 27, of Dallas, TX, for example, who says she hasn't been to Broadway shows because "it feels like a gated community" that she, as a young Black female living outside of New York City, doesn't feel part of. "I think it's just the accessibility. Dallas is not a hub for [live theater], so you hardly ever see anything about it." When she and her friends did venture to New York City, Broadway was on their bucket list, but they didn't make it to a show. "We didn't necessarily know enough or do the right research. We looked up a show and we were like, 'Oh my gosh, we have to go home and change. We have dinner plans set at eight. Trying to throw a Broadway show into the mix just didn't make sense."

Often, opening the "gate" to the theater community takes the right introduction. This was the case for Miguel, 30, of Queens, NY, who was introduced to theater by a friend's uncle. "He was basically just shocked that I had never been to a show, so he and his partner took me to Moulin Rouge." From there, Miguel was hooked. Creating more introduction points to Broadway is key. While many respondents said that they first experienced a Broadway show with their parents during childhood, or on a school field trip, there are notably fewer inroads during young adulthood. Case in point: 89% say that they'd go to a Broadway show if their friends were going—but 38% say they rarely ever, or never, hear about theater from their friends. And 93% say they'd go to a show if their school or employer offered tickets, which is an underutilized opportunity for the industry to create inroads with college-age audiences and young professionals.

67%
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"Broadway-curious."

Meet the Broadway Curious

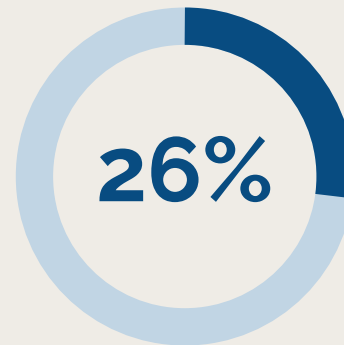
Nearly one-quarter (22%) of the Gen Zs and Millennials we surveyed have not been to live theater or Broadway in the past year but are interested (56%) or very interested (44%) in going in the upcoming year. This "Broadway-curious" psychographic tends to be **female-skewing, Millennial, and single**. They are live entertainment enthusiasts who are more likely than average to go to concerts, comedy shows, local festivals, and museums, and they are looking for classic Broadway experiences: 86% say Broadway shouldn't change a thing as compared to 77% of survey respondents overall.



THERE'S NO "I" IN BROADWAY

According to Gen Zs and Millennials, part of seeing themselves in the live theater space is, quite literally, seeing people like them at, or in, shows. While more than one-third of respondents (35%) said Broadway was for "anyone and everyone," only one quarter (26%) said it was for "me" and even fewer (20%) said it was for "my generation." The overarching perception is that Broadway is for a crowd that's older, whiter, and richer. "I think Broadway is a little bit bougie. Miguel explained, adding, "I don't see myself in the audience or the shows. Sometimes, in the back of my head, I'm like, 'Do I fit in here?'" David imagined Broadway's audience as "a well-to-do couple wearing a suit and a dress" and Deb, who previously described Broadway as a 'gated community', elaborated to say that it was for "CEOs, CFOs, and people of stature." Ari was blunter: "White and 50s."

Beyond the audience, there is a call for talent that reflects the diversity of younger generations. "More diverse casting is something that has been spoken about a lot in the Asian community," Joanna told us. "We know when there's an Asian actress in [a show]. It's shared around. It makes me want to see the show more, but that's not the only factor. It makes me cheer from afar." Socioeconomics are also at play. "Historically, the arts, it's been a forum of privilege," Ali noted.



Only one quarter of Gen Zs and Millennials said that Broadway was for "me".

"Broadway feels like a gated community."

— Deb, 27, Dallas, TX

Another factor that can make Broadway alienating is its regionality: the number one response of who Broadway is for was, you guessed it, "New Yorkers." Crysta put Broadway's close link to the Big Apple this way: "When you go to New York, the first thing you say is, 'I want to go see the Empire State Building, and then I want to go to a Broadway show.' It's very quintessentially New York. Whereas if you're going to Philadelphia, you don't say, 'I want to go to the Kimmel Center right after I see the Liberty Bell.'"

For Ari, seeing himself at Broadway shows more often comes back to Broadway being more top of mind. Like the vast majority of respondents who said taking this survey made them more interested in Broadway, Ari left our interview 'Broadway-curious': "Now that we've had this conversation, I'm going to go on Arena Stage's website and figure out what they're doing because I'm like, 'Damn, that would be kind of fun to go to a Broadway show.'"

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a 1,012-person online survey fielded in January 2024 among 498 Gen Zs, ages 18-to-28, and 514 Millennials, ages 29-to-44.

Three-quarters of survey respondents (753) were from the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut) and one-quarter (259) were nationally reflective of the U.S. population outside of the tri-state area. Two-thirds of survey-takers were women (642) and one-third were men (359); less than 1% identified as gender nonbinary. The racial and ethnic composition of respondents reflected that of the national population. Theater rejectors—individuals who had not been to live theater in the past year and who reported they had no interest in going to live theater in the upcoming year—were not included in this sample.

Findings were analyzed by 40 different demographic and psychographic cuts, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, geographic region, and various theater-going profiles, among other areas of interest.

In addition, twelve, 30-minute one-on-one Zoom interviews were conducted with a hand-recruited group of diverse, culture-forward Gen Zs and Millennials, ages 21-to-39, representing 8 U.S. markets including New York, NY; Brooklyn, NY; Stamford, CT; Jersey City, NJ; Washington D.C.; Dallas, TX; Chicago, IL; and Los Angeles, CA.

Independent research firm, Culture Co-op, conducted and analyzed research and findings.

ABOUT NO GUARANTEES

No Guarantees is the Tony Award-winning, theatrical production company bringing artist-driven, universally appealing stories to life. Founded in 2017, No Guarantees is working to reinvigorate and reimagine Broadway through outstanding productions, strategic investments, community engagement, innovative tech initiatives, and bold creative decisions. No Guarantees' dynamic and creative team, considerable resources, and dedication to artists allow it to take the risks needed to make amazing stories accessible to the masses and gather the unique insights, learnings, and data needed to have a meaningful impact on the industry. No Guarantees has produced James Ijames' Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Fat Ham*, and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Bad Cinderella* and co-produced *Merrily We Roll Along* starring Daniel Radcliffe, Jonathan Groff & Lindsay Mendez, and *Hadestown*, among many other shows. Current and upcoming productions include *Player Kings* starring Ian McKellen and Saheem Ali, Jocelyn Bioh, and Michael Thurber's new musical *Goddess*.