



Trends in Audience Behavior

ELECTIONS, SHADOW AUDIENCES & HIDDEN TREASURES

A study of sales trends and audience
behavior in the Fall of 2024.



To start the year, we're looking at how elections affect ticket sales and mining for hidden treasures...

Welcome to the mid-point of the 2024-25 season! This season was always bound to be a crazy time in the world, so we were particularly excited to dig into the numbers for our semiannual Trends in Audience Behavior study.

In particular, we wanted to measure how much a major anxiety-provoking event (the U.S. election) affected ticket sales. To our surprise—and contrary to many planning conversations we witnessed—you'll see that the election didn't seem to have a big effect on sales. However, trends that we did find in the data include a continuation of more people buying fewer tickets, contributing to revenue figures that still don't match pre-pandemic levels.

In this iteration of the study, we also uncovered some hidden treasures revealed by our analysis that may help spur income growth at your organizations (read more on page 23):

- Build on demonstrated loyalty, brick by brick
- Treat your new audience (and their data) like gold
- Make sure your tickets aren't underpriced for highly sold performances
- Activate your shadow audience

Speaking of those shadow audiences, we first examined shadow audiences—and the positive effect they could have on our revenue problem—in the summer of 2024. In this study, we take a deeper look at the behavior of shadow audiences after their data is captured and their identity is revealed through digital ticket sharing (see page 13).

We welcome your feedback on the study and insights about what's happening at your organization relative to the industry trends. Don't hesitate to reach out to us at smarter@jcainc.com.

In Data,

The Team at JCA Performing Arts

jcainc.com/performing-arts



Data & Definitions

For this study, we focused on ticket sales and audience trends in **Fall of 2024** relative to the previous 5 seasons of fall performances.

Data was gathered from 17 major organizations* in different regions of the U.S.:

- 5 Theatre Companies
- 5 Music Organizations
- 2 Operas
- 3 Performing Arts Centers
- 2 Dance Companies

All organizations in the analysis have fall to spring seasons.
All performances under analysis were before 12/31/24.

UNDER ANALYSIS

5
SEASONS



Fall 2019



Fall 2021



Fall 2022



Fall 2023



Fall 2024

5,953
PERFORMANCES



4,599,281
TICKETS



*Organization names anonymized for privacy.



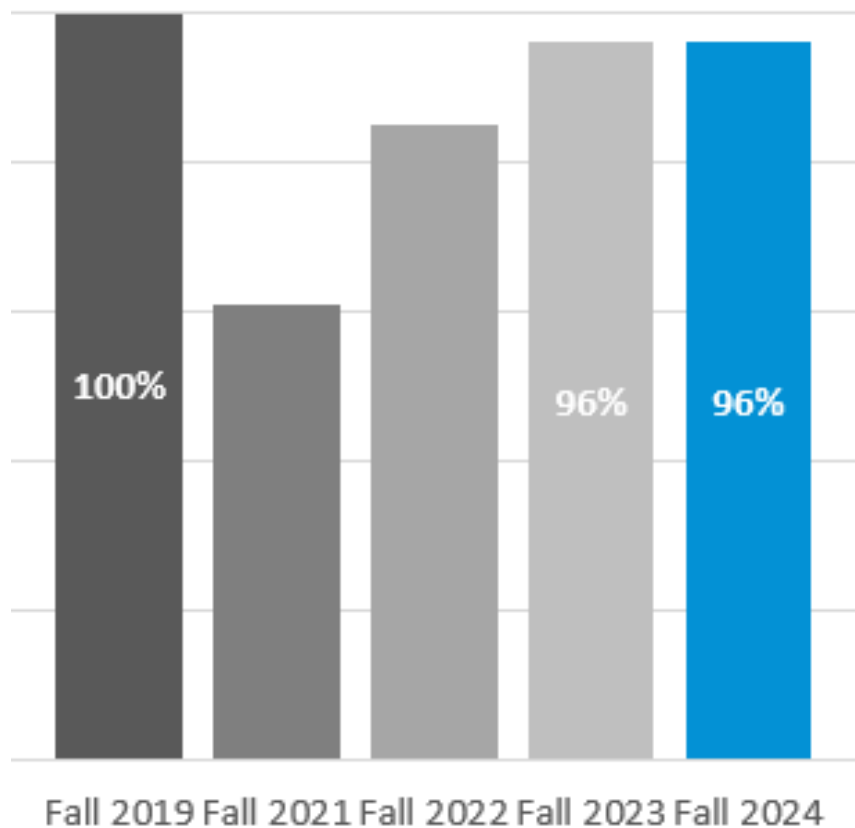
TICKET SALES & AUDIENCE TRENDS

Trends in Audience Behavior:
Elections, Shadow Audiences & Hidden Treasures

TICKET SALES HAVE STABILIZED

TICKET SALES REMAINED STEADY IN FALL 2024, RELATIVE TO FALL 2023, DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF AN ELECTION SEASON.

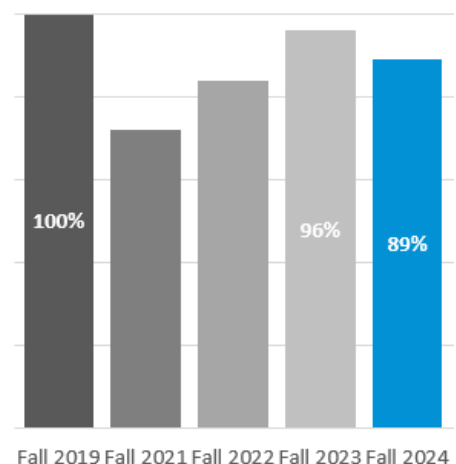
Ticket Sales Relative to Fall 2019



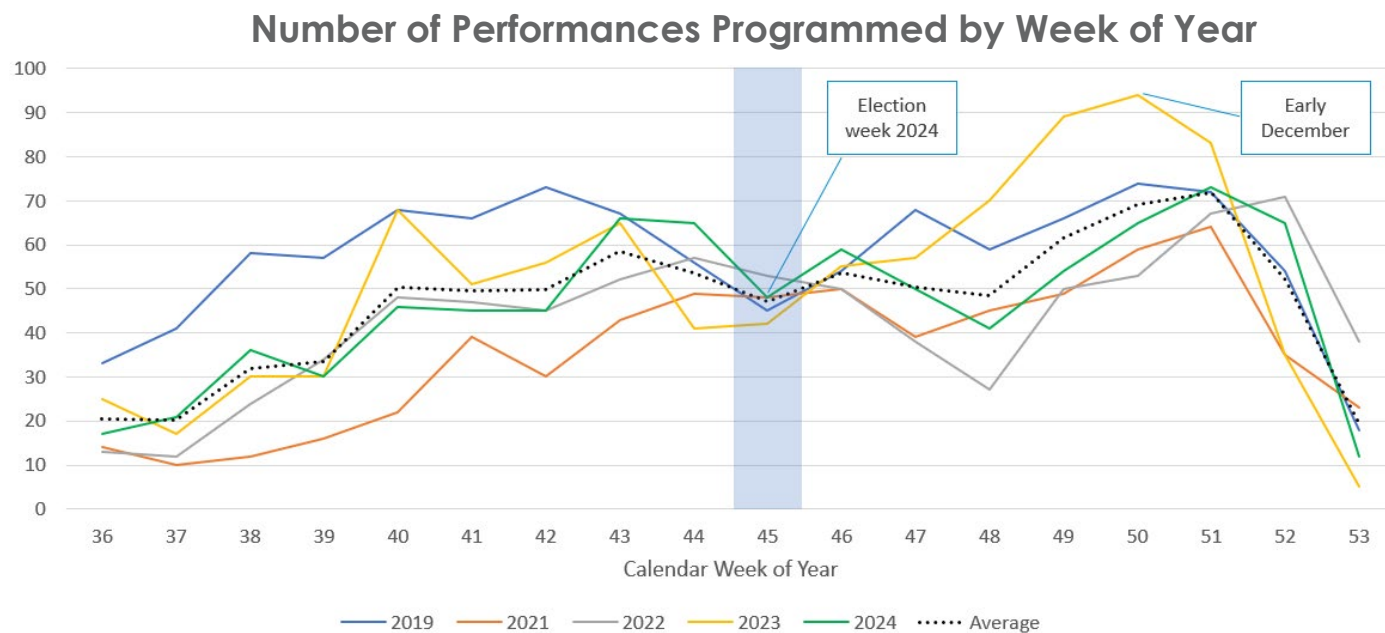
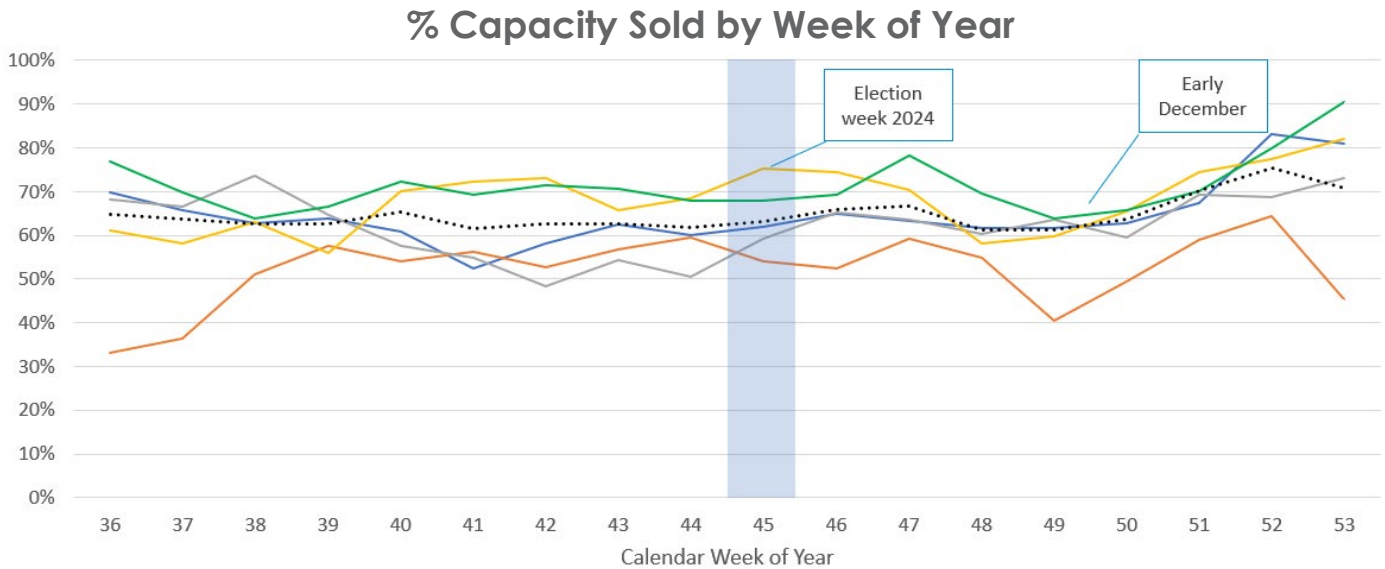
The number of tickets sold remained the same relative to Fall 2023, which suggests that the election didn't have a big effect on ticket sales.

We also found Fall 2024 had 7.2% fewer performances than Fall 2023, which led to higher capacities sold in Fall 2024 (fuller houses!).

Performances



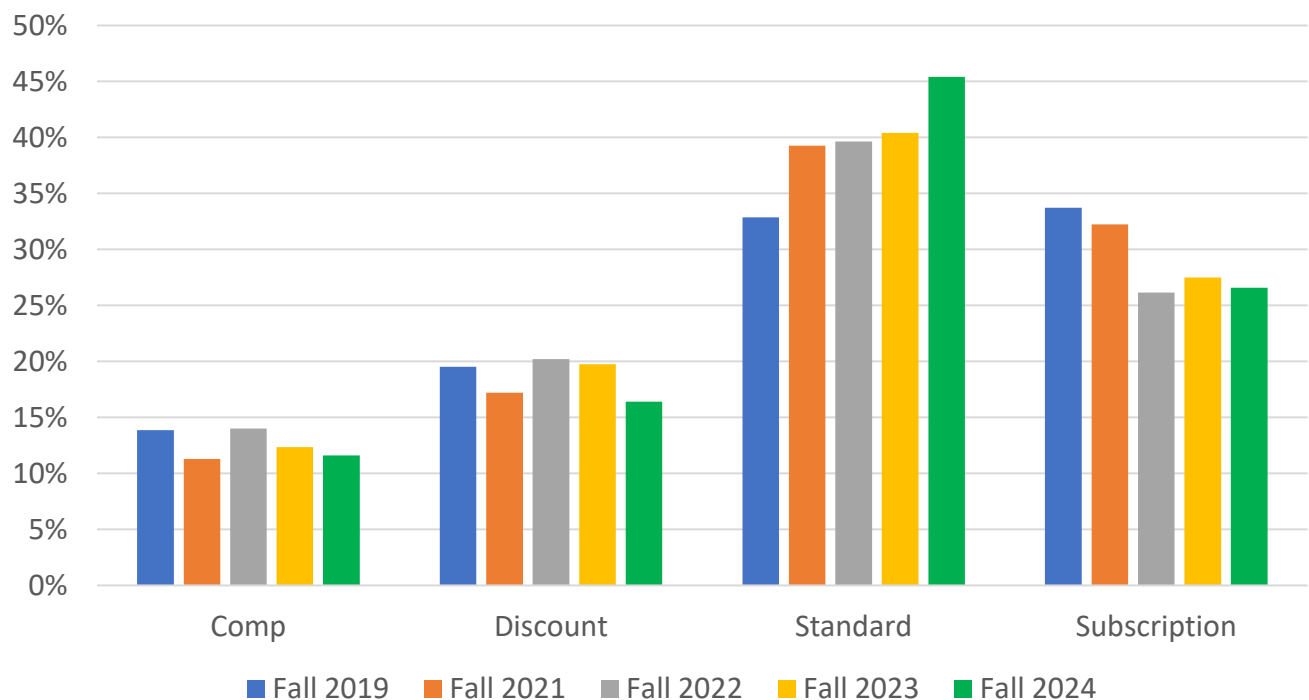
Election season didn't significantly impact ticket sales.



Capacity (number of tickets sold relative to tickets available to sell) was lower during election week 2024 relative to the same week in 2023; however, there were also fewer performances that week in 2023 which would have increased capacities if ticket sales were similar in both years.

The reduction in total performances that we saw on page 5 in Fall 2024 relative to Fall 2023 was due to having fewer performances in early December 2024.

Standard ticket sales have increased while subscription sales stabilized & discount sales decreased.

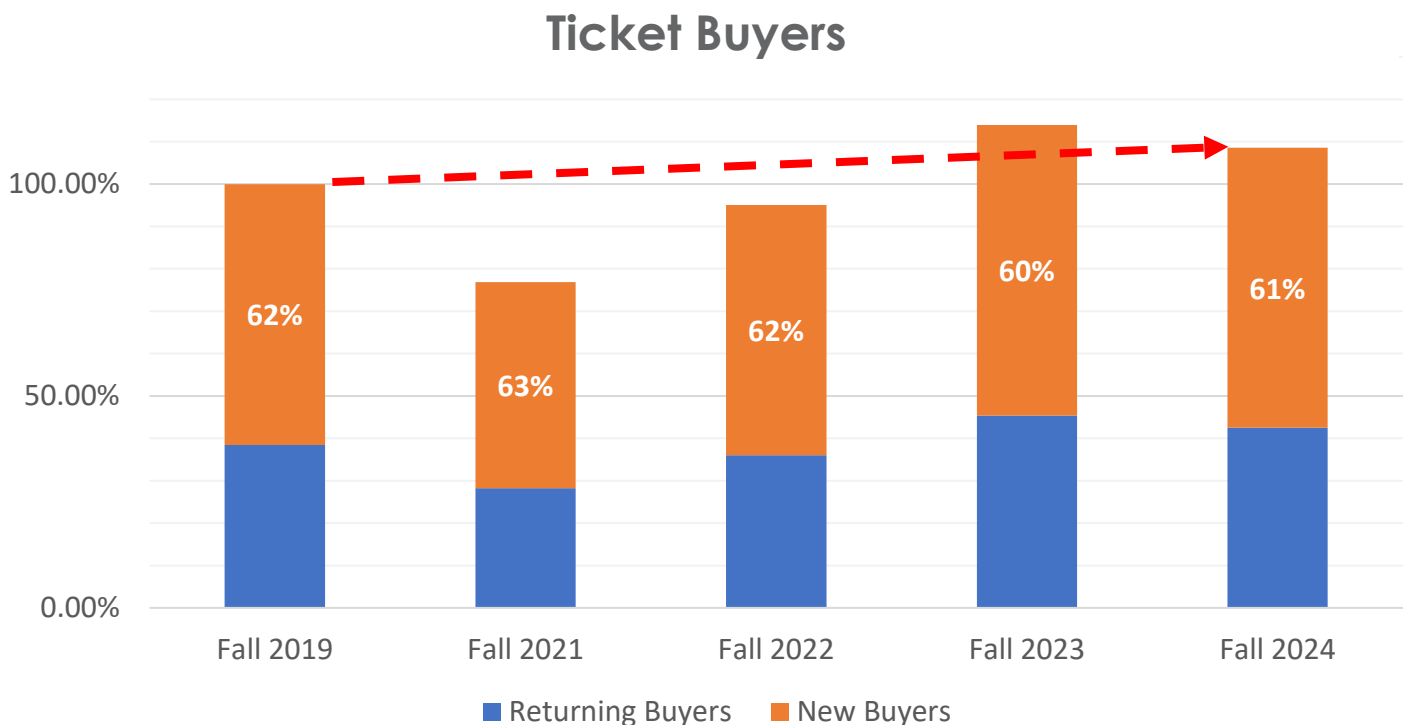


The chart above compares the percentage of all tickets sold at each ticket type. The proportion of all tickets sold that were standard tickets increased significantly in Fall 2024.



The number of total ticket buyers has increased since Fall 2019.

CONSIDERING TICKET SALES STILL LAG BEHIND PRE-PANDEMIC SALES (PAGE 5), THIS MEANS THAT MORE PEOPLE ARE BUYING FEWER TICKETS.



Additionally, the majority of ticket buyers are new.

The orange portion of the bars in the chart above represent new bookers. In 2018-19, 62% of the audience was new, meaning they hadn't booked any tickets before. The percentage of new bookers has remained relatively stable since 2019, but the overall volume of both returned and new bookers has increased.



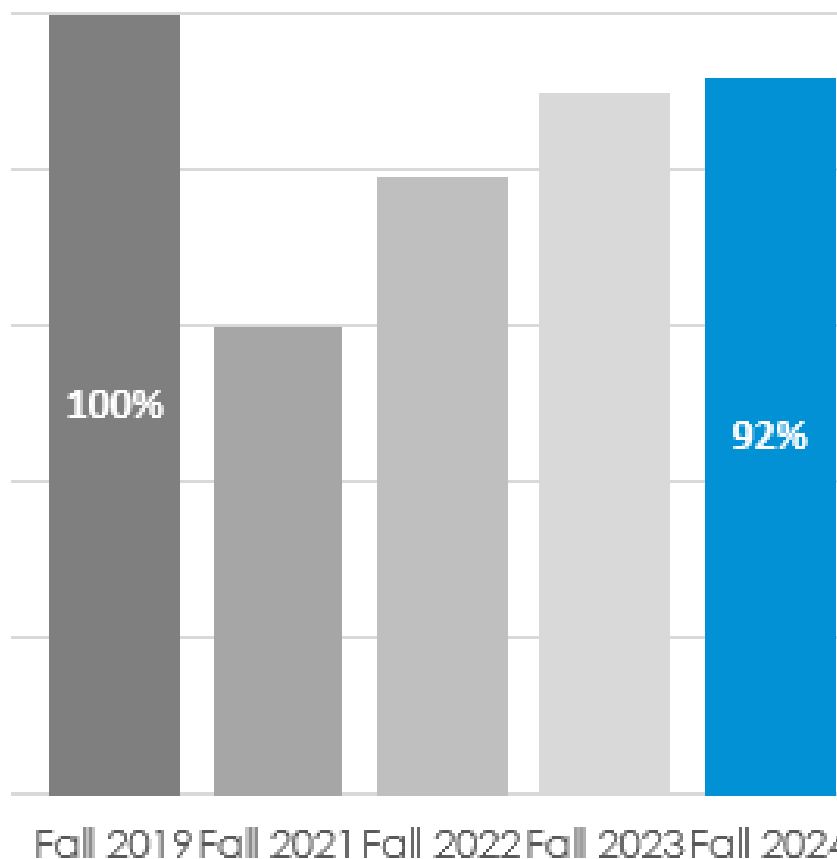
INCOME & PRICING

Trends in Audience Behavior:
Elections, Shadow Audiences & Hidden Treasures

Income from ticket sales still lags behind pre-pandemic levels.

IN FALL 2024, INCOME WAS AT 92% OF INCOME FROM FALL OF 2019 WHEN FACTORING IN INFLATION.

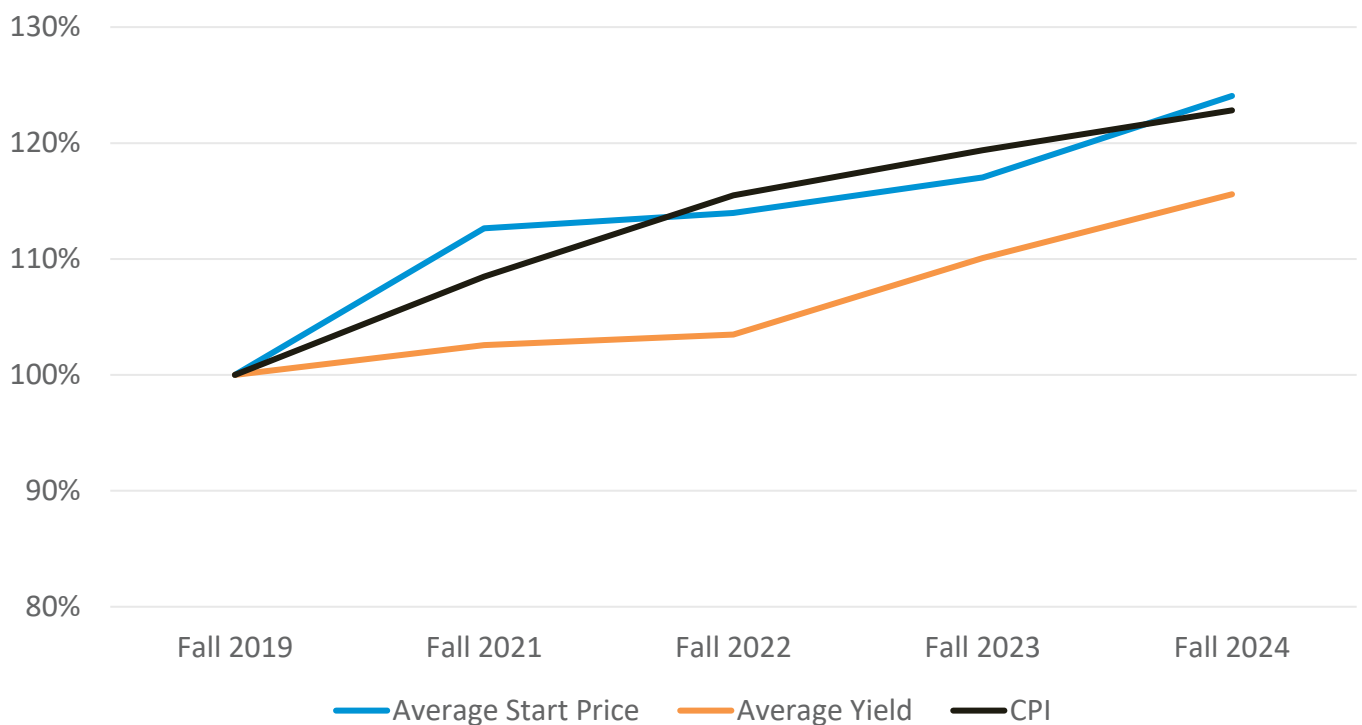
Ticket Income Relative to Fall 2019



Organizations still are not bringing in as much income as they did pre-pandemic. When factoring in inflation, we still have a ways to go to get back to pre-pandemic revenue levels.



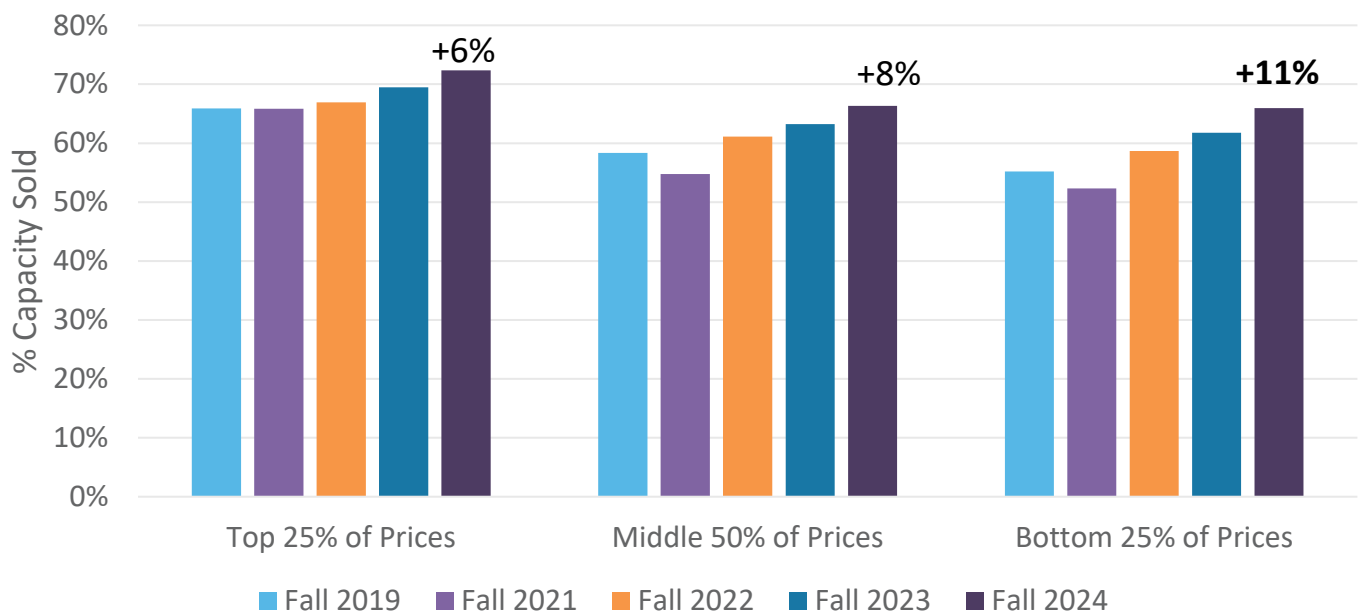
Face-value ticket prices have caught up to inflation, but average ticket yield has a way to go...



Average Start Price has increased significantly since Fall 2019, and in Fall 2024, it caught up to the pace of inflation. However, although Average Yield, or the average amount that people paid for a ticket (revenue divided by tickets sold), increased over the study period, it is still behind the overall pace of inflation since Fall 2019.



Sales at low prices increased most dramatically in Fall 2024.



THIS TREND IS LIKELY DUE TO FULLER HOUSES. Because patrons usually buy high-priced tickets first, when we see fuller houses, more low-priced tickets are sold. This is a challenge that requires keen pricing strategy to ensure that lower-priced tickets aren't *under priced*.



SHADOW AUDIENCES

Trends in Audience Behavior:
Elections, Shadow Audiences & Hidden Treasures



What are Shadow Audiences—and what was new with Shadow Audiences in 2024?

“[Shadow audiences](#)” are people who accompany ticket buyers to shows. You typically don’t know who they are, and don’t have their data in your database.

Shadow audiences usually represent around [60%](#) of the people in your audience. Digital ticket providers such as [True Tickets](#), which initially leveraged blockchain technology but have since evolved beyond it, are helping reveal shadow audiences through ticket sharing. When a ticket buyer shares a digital ticket with their theatre-going partner (a.k.a. shadow audience member), that person’s data then goes into the organization’s database—presenting a fantastic opportunity for marketing to engage that newly revealed shadow audience member.

In our [last Trends in Audience Behavior study](#), we took a first look at Shadow Audience members. For this study, we added more organizations to the analysis and dug in deeper to understand:

- The volume of shadow audiences revealed through digital ticketing.
- The revenue they bring to the organization.
- The behaviors they exhibit as ticket buyers.



Shadow Audience Data & Definitions

Data for this portion of our study was gathered from 31 major organizations* in the U.S. who use True Tickets:

- 14 Performing Arts Centers
- 7 Music Organizations
- 7 Theatre Companies
- 1 Opera
- 2 Dance Companies

All performances under analysis were before 12/31/24.

UNDER ANALYSIS



3

**FULL CALENDAR
YEARS**



2022



2023



2024



5,400,000
CONSTITUENTS

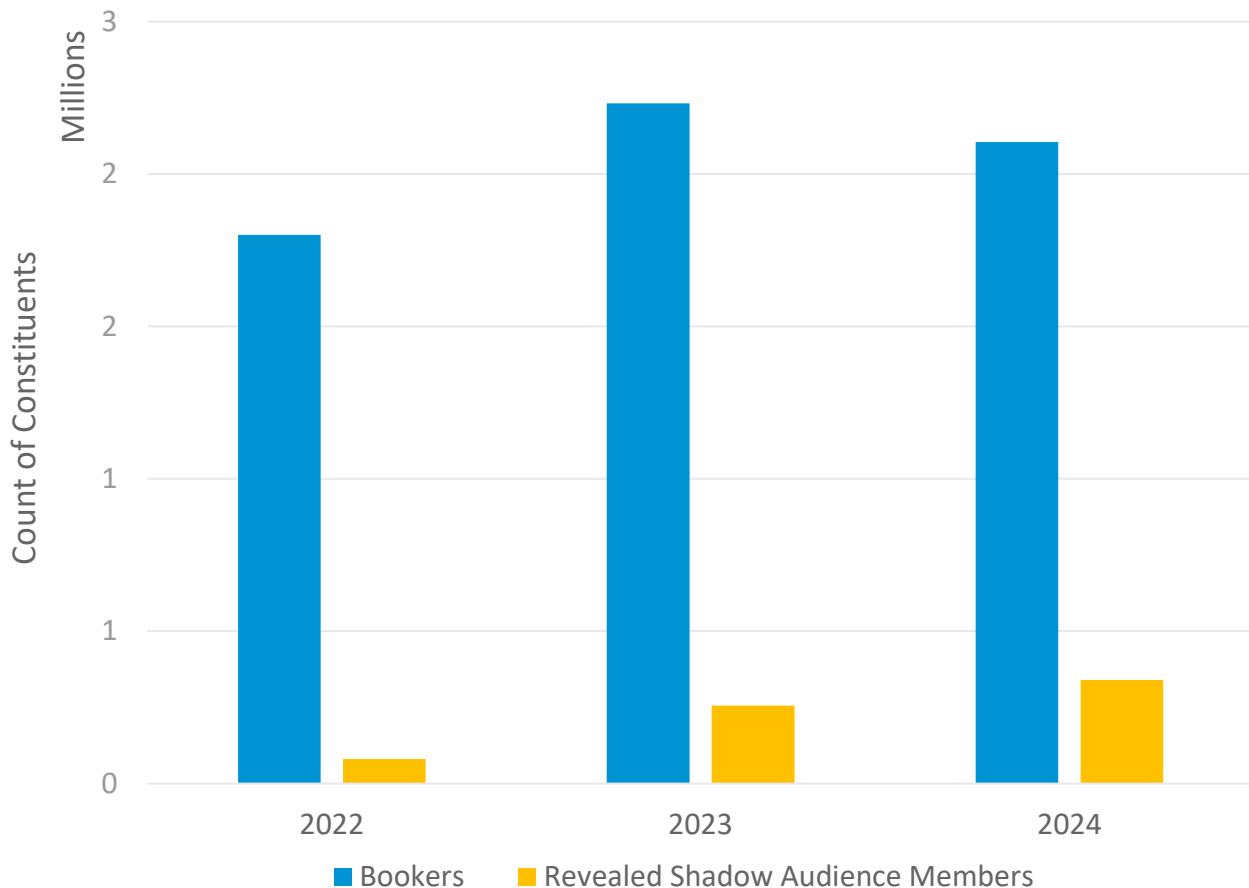


31,800,000
TICKETS



*Organization names anonymized for privacy.

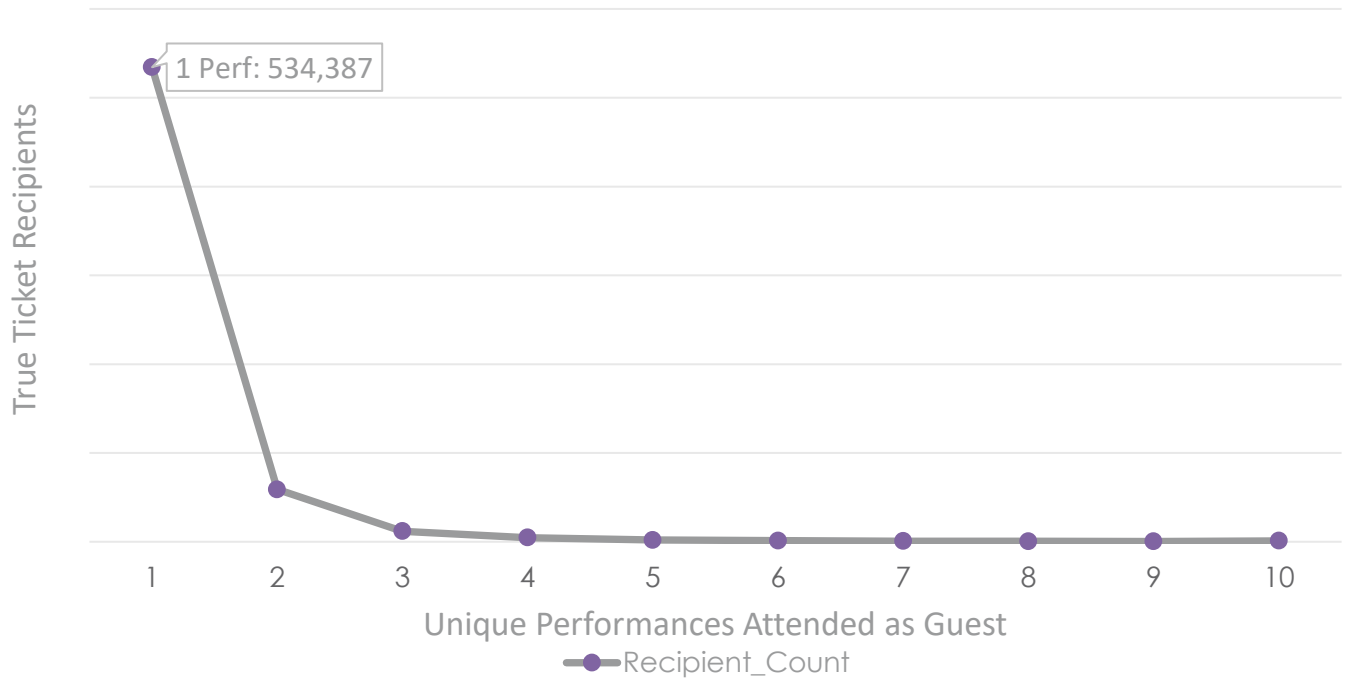
The number of revealed shadow audience members is growing...



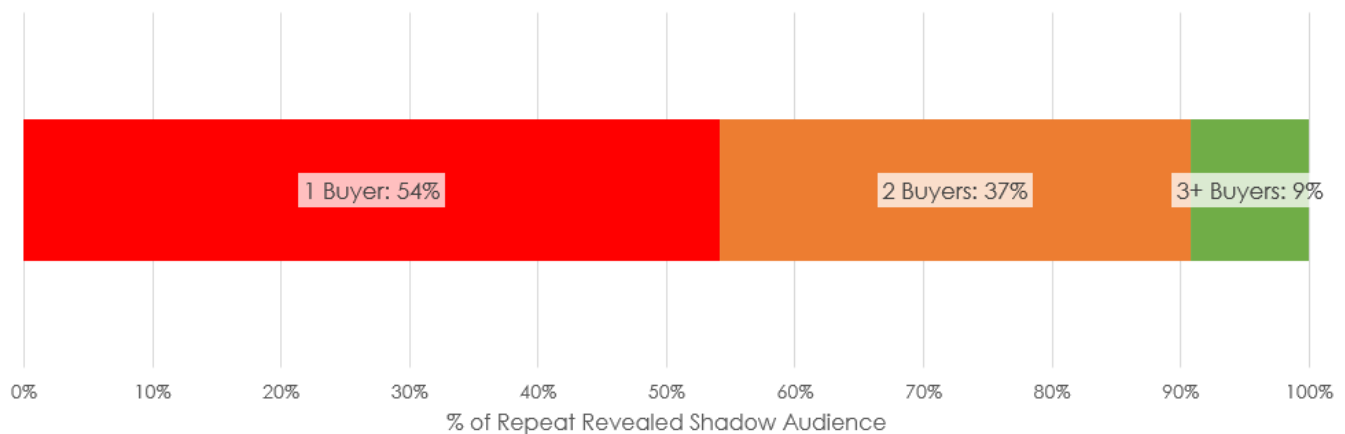
As adoption of digital ticketing increases, the number of revealed shadow audiences is also rising. The chart above shows that from 2023 to 2024, the number of unique recipients nearly doubled.

This is particularly exciting because these recipients of digital tickets are now part of the organizations' databases, enabling organizations to cultivate relationships with these audience members through targeted communications!

Most Revealed Audience Members come as a guest once.



Of Revealed Audience Members who attended multiple times as a guest, 50% of them attend with the same original ticket buyer.



Revealed Shadow Audiences have huge potential to bring in additional revenue as new ticket buyers...



Approximately **10.6%** of revealed shadow audience members came back to purchase tickets in 2024.



73,859 tickets were sold to revealed shadow audience members in 2024*.



An average of **2,383 tickets** were sold to revealed shadow audiences per organization.



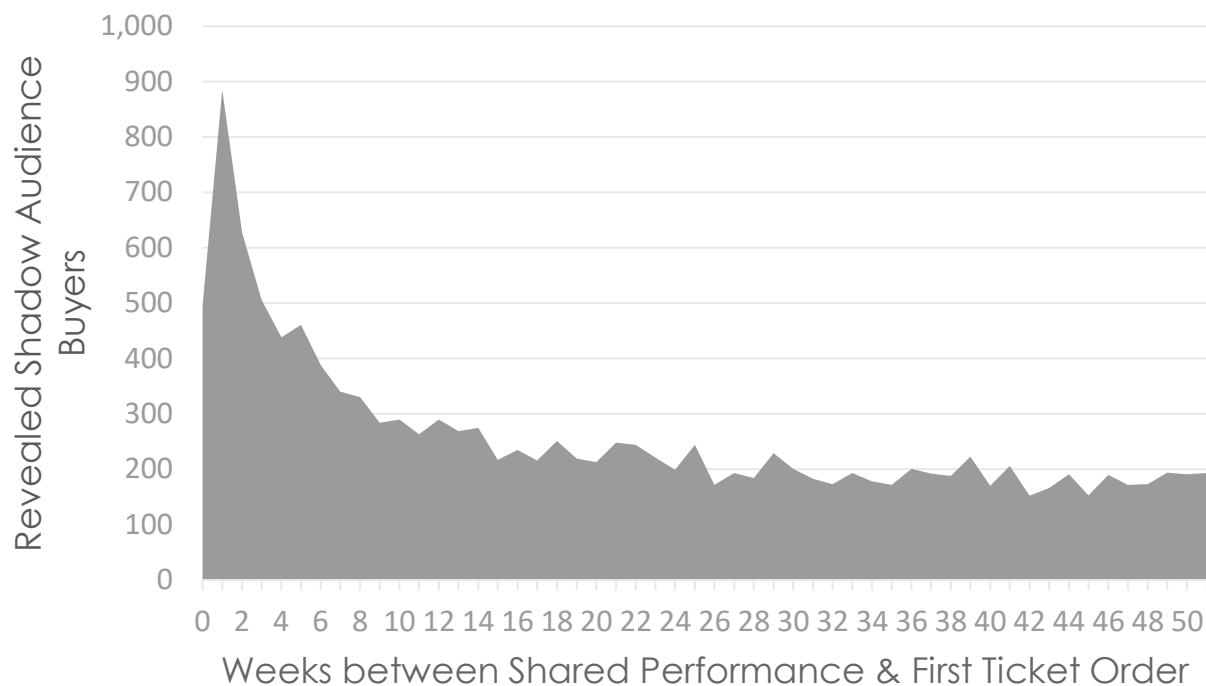
This represents **\$3,861,553** in revenue....



...or an average of **\$124,566** in revenue from Revealed Shadow Audiences per organization.

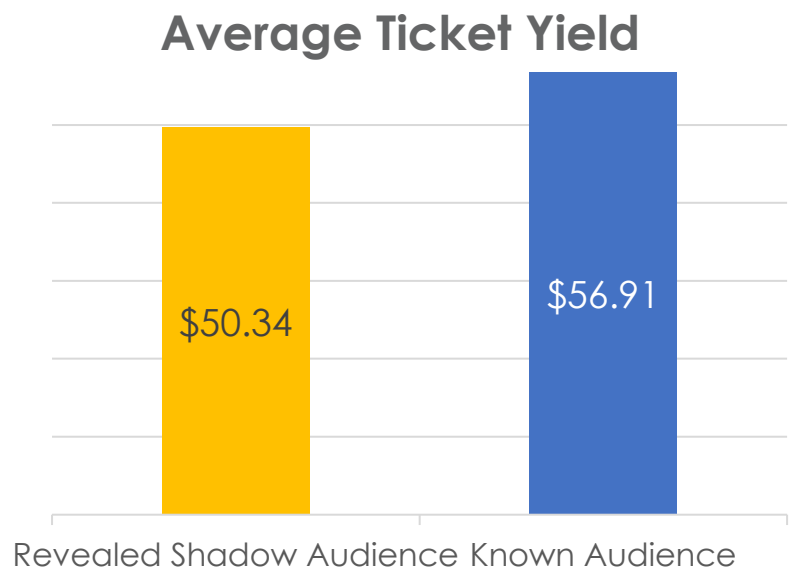
These are impressive numbers. Just by being able to capture shadow audiences in the database, these organizations made an incremental income of \$124K in 2024 alone. This could be part of the solution to our income problem that we saw on page 10.

Revealed Shadow Audiences tend to make their first purchase within the first couple weeks after they use a shared ticket.



ADDITIONALLY, REVEALED SHADOW AUDIENCES TEND TO HAVE A LOWER AVERAGE YIELD THAN THE KNOWN AUDIENCE.

The chart to the right shows that Shadow Audiences tend to spend less than their known counterparts. This, combined with the second purchase time charted above, is consistent with new-to-file buying behavior.



Revealed Shadow Audiences are also a good source of donations...

\$232,632

Total Contributions from Revealed
Shadow Audience

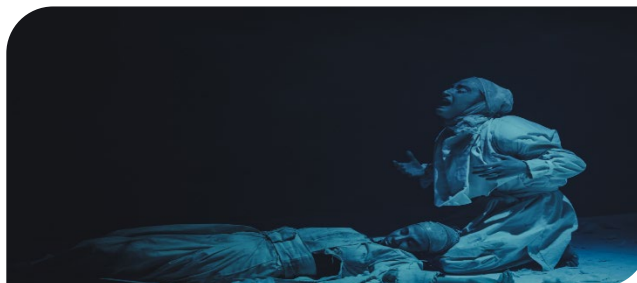
\$7,504.26

Average Contributions per Organization
from Revealed Shadow Audience

\$163.71

Average Contribution per Revealed
Shadow Audience who donate

This shows us that the ability to reveal shadow audience members through digital ticket sharing not only has great potential for ticket sales, but also for donations.





LEARNINGS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Trends in Audience Behavior:
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Key Learnings

In summary...



The election season didn't have a big effect on ticket sales.

Ticket sales remained consistent in Fall 2024 compared to the previous fall ([page 5](#)). While election week in 2024 had less capacity sold than the same week the previous year, this is probably due to the organizations under analysis having more performances that week ([page 6](#)).



More people are buying less. We know that the number of bookers has increased since 2019 ([page 8](#)), but ticket sales still have not caught up to pre-pandemic levels ([page 5](#)). While it's wonderful to have a larger audience base, especially new audience members, we need to be conscious of the fact that they are buying less at our organizations, leaving a gap for us to close.



New audiences are a high proportion of our audience and growing in number. New audiences consistently comprising over 60% of our audiences, even as the overall number of audience members continues to grow ([page 8](#)).



Income is still lower than pre-pandemic, largely because of inflation and fewer performances at higher capacity. Average Yield is lagging behind inflation ([page 11](#)), and fuller houses typically mean more lower-priced tickets are sold ([page 12](#)). Organizations will need savvy pricing strategies to bring income back to pre-pandemic levels.



Revealed shadow audiences show great potential. Just 6.4% of revealed shadow audience members came back to purchase tickets in 2024, which resulted in an average of \$120,728 in revenue from revealed shadow audiences per organization ([page 18](#)). Think of the return if you could convert 10 or 15% of that revealed shadow audience!

Hidden Treasures

Use this study to uncover new audience & revenue-building possibilities.



Meet people where they are—build on demonstrated loyalty. In the face of subscription decline, we have the opportunity to redefine what loyalty to our organizations means. Your subscribers are not the only people in your audience who are loyal. Some loyal audience members may only attend once a year. What would happen if you got those people to come back even one more time in a year? Find ways to build your loyal audience brick by brick, leveraging audience segments that you haven't traditionally defined as "loyal."



Treat your new audience (and their data) like gold. They are! New audiences are growing. Consider the tremendous opportunity they present. How can you retain the large number of new audiences? And what can you learn about these people so you can get more new audience members like them to come to your organization?



Make sure your tickets aren't underpriced—especially for high-capacity performances. Pricing has a drastic effect on our overall income number, and it's important that we get it right, using smart revenue management practices. This is particularly true when fuller houses mean that more of your lower priced, less frequently purchased seats will be filled.



Reveal and activate your shadow audiences. Our study shows that shadow audiences have huge potential to make up the gap in income that we still have post-pandemic. As 60% of our audiences are shadow audiences, just imagine what could happen if you're able to capture those audiences' data and start to build a relationship with them through targeted communication. Huge potential returns!



What's next for our audiences?

We're sooo close to a full rebound! With thoughtful marketing and careful revenue management as we move into the second half of the 2024-25 season, we think we can reach—and surpass—2019's high-water mark for both tickets and income.

JCA Performing Arts is here to help—our expert consultants will help you build an excellent revenue strategy, from CRM support and analysis to pricing and segmentation. And Vivian is here to give you the AI-powered pricing, forecasting, and data analysis you need to reach your goals.

LET'S TALK



jcainc.com/performing-arts

Thanks to those who contributed to this study!

Participating Organizations

Jamie Alexander

Jennifer Sowinski Nemeth

Preety Adams

Jonathan Carpenter

Kelly Cronin Krein

Andrew Moreau

Chelsea Rudisill

True Tickets

Find more resources and research at jcainc.com/performing-arts

