

Artists and Other Cultural Workers

A Statistical Portrait



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April 2019

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Cover photos (L-R, top to bottom): Dancers perform with Infinity Dance Theater. Photo by Sofia Negron; Sound Designer Ryan Hickey works on Signature Theatre's production of *Crazy for You* in Arlington, Virginia. Photo by Christopher Mueller; DonRico Hawkins, Jr., a seventh-grade student in Focus: HOPE's Excel Photography program, in Detroit, Michigan. Photo courtesy of Annette Vanover, Focus: HOPE; Filmmaker Ya-Hsuan Huang captures Edith Kaphuka and her fellow students sweeping at recess in Ngwale Village, Malawi, as part of the Global Lives Project. Photo by Jason J. Price; A demonstration of letterpress printing in Mighty Tieton's book arts facility, which is used during the annual LiTFUSE: A Poets' Workshop to print a broadside of the participants' poems in Tieton, Washington. Photo by Ed Marquand; The witches (Jennifer Hunt, Suzanne Curtis, and Sonja Lanzener) surround Macbeth (Remi Sandri) in a performance of *MacBeth* by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, as part of the Shakespeare in American Communities Military Base Tour. Photo: Phil Scarsbrook; A local participant in Western North Carolina's HandMade in America, Potter William Baker shapes a new piece on the wheel in his studio. Photo courtesy of EnergyXchange; 2016 NEA National Heritage Fellow, master huastecan son musician, and advocate Artemio Posadas. Photo by Tom Pich; Performers in *House of Eternal Return* in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the first permanent installation by Meow Wolf. Photo courtesy of Meow Wolf

About the Report

This omnibus report, *Artists and Other Cultural Workers: A Statistical Portrait*, extends the range of statistics that the **National Endowment for the Arts** historically has tracked as part of its decades-long research function. Although the agency periodically reports facts and figures about 11 distinct artist occupations (based on U.S. Census data), this report brings in other job characteristics, other data sources, and even other kinds of cultural workers. Among key findings are:

1. Regardless of occupation, over **5 million workers** are employed in **arts and cultural industries**. They are all wage-and-salary workers.
 - There are nearly 2.5 million artists in the U.S. labor force (either self-employed or wage-and-salary workers).
 - Approximately 333,000 (self-employed or wage-and-salary) workers hold secondary jobs as artists.
 - Another 1.2 million (self-employed or wage-and-salary) workers hold a primary job in a cultural occupation other than artist.
2. Artists are **3.6 times** as likely as other workers to be self-employed.
 - In 2012–2016, roughly 34 percent of all artists were self-employed. This compares with 9 percent of all workers.
 - Most self-employed artists seem to like their work arrangement: 79 percent say they would not prefer to work for someone else, while 58 percent cite flexible schedules and independence as the main reasons they are self-employed.
3. Artists are becoming a **larger share** of the U.S. labor force.
 - In 2006, artists composed 1.42 percent of the labor force; by 2017, they were 1.55 percent, representing a 6.1 percent increase.
 - In 2017, the artist unemployment rate hit an 11-year low.
 - As a group, artists currently experience unemployment rates similar to those of all U.S. workers.
4. **Faster-than-average growth** in employment is projected for set and exhibit designers, actors, producers and directors, and film and video editors.
 - Between 2016 and 2026, annual job openings will have averaged 7,400 for actors and 14,100 for producers and directors. Employment growth in these occupations stems from strong demand for new movies and television shows.
 - Employment of film/video editors is projected to grow at a 17 percent clip. A contributing factor is the number of shows increasingly produced by Internet-only sources and streaming services.

Chapter by chapter, this report builds a cohesive statistical summary of artists and other cultural workers in the United States. In doing so, it complements the National Endowment for the Arts' regular measurements of two other key segments of the arts ecosystem: arts industries and organizations, and levels of arts participation nationwide.

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Table of Contents

Illustrations vi

Executive Summary vii

Overview of Methods and Data xiii

Chapter I. Employment Trends 1

Chapter II. Demographic and Other Characteristics 9

Chapter III. Self-Employment 21

Chapter IV. Income and Earnings 25

Chapter V. Career Outlook 31

References 35

Additional Information 36

Illustrations

Figures

Executive Summary

Figure ES1. Number of artists in the labor force: 2017	vii
Figure ES2. Percent of artists, by occupation, who hold the occupation as a second job: 2017	viii
Figure ES3. Arts and cultural employment: 1998-2016	ix
Figure ES4. Unemployment rates for artists, professional workers, and all workers in the labor force: 2006-2017	ix
Figure ES5. Percent of professionals, artists, and all U.S. workers with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education: 2012-2016	x
Figure ES6. Percent self-employed: 2012-2016	xi
Figure ES7. Projected percent change in employment: 2016-2026	xii

Overview of Methods and Data

Summary of datasets used in this report:	xiv
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Chapter I. Employment Trends

Figure 1a. Number of artists in the labor force: 2017	1
Figure 1b. Artists as a share of the U.S. labor force: 2006-2017	2
Figure 1c. Real value added by arts and culture: 1998-2016	3
Figure 1d. Unemployment rates: 201	4
Figure 1e. Unemployment rates for artists, professional workers, and all workers in the labor force: 2006-2017	5
Figure 1f. Percent of artists, by occupation, who hold the occupation as a second job: 2017	7
Figure 1g. Percent of artists by class of worker: 2017	7
Figure 1h. Number of photographic processing workers in the U.S. labor force: 2006-2017	8

Chapter II. Demographic and Other Characteristics

Figure 2a. Percent married by age group, all workers and artists: 2012-2016	9
Figure 2b. Percent of professionals, artists, and all U.S. workers with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education: 2012-2016	14
Figure 2c. Percent of bachelor's degrees in "study of the arts" awarded to African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians/Native Alaskans: 1995-2015	17

Chapter III. Self-Employment

Figure 3a. Main reason artists give for being self-employed: 2017	21
Figure 3b. Self-employment rates for artists and all other professional workers: 2003-2015	23

Chapter IV. Income and Earnings

Figure 4a. Median annual wages and salaries by artist occupation: 2012-2016	25
Figure 4b. Artists whose hourly wages range highly: 2017	27
Figure 4c. Median income-to-poverty ratios by artist occupation: 2012-2016	28
Figure 4d. Women's-to-men's earnings ratio by age group: 2012-2016	29
Figure 4e. Top primary instruments played by musicians: 2018	30

Chapter V. Career Outlook

Figure 5a. Projected percent change in employment: 2016-2026	32
Figure 5b. Real value added from arts and culture by "other information services": 2014-2016	33

Tables

Chapter I. Employment Trends

Table 1. Primary and secondary employment in artist occupations: 2017	6
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Chapter II. Demographic and Other Characteristics

Table 2a. Median age of artists: 2012-2016	10
Table 2b. Employed artists by occupation and gender: 2012-2016	11
Table 2c. Employed artists by occupation and race/ethnicity: 2012-2016	13
Table 2d. Percent of U.S. labor force with selected arts-related degrees: 2012-2016	15
Table 2e. Bachelor's degrees most commonly earned by artists and selected cultural workers: 2012-2016	16

Artists and Other Cultural Workers

A Statistical Portrait

Executive Summary

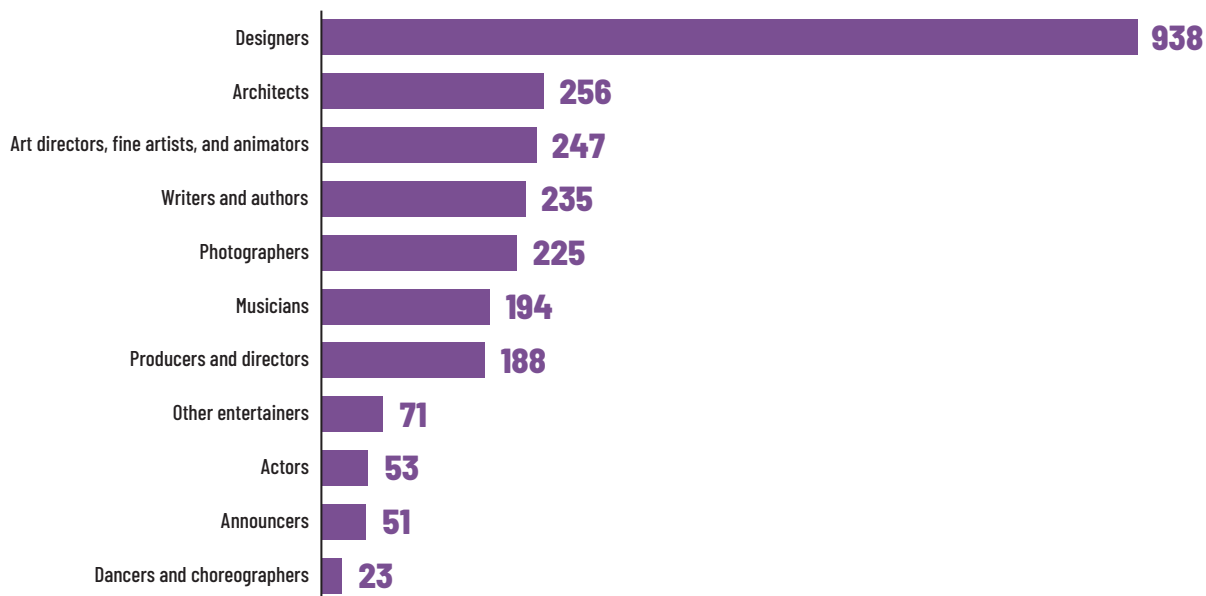
This report uses federal statistics from various sources to describe the artists and other cultural workers who participate in the U.S. labor market. Wherever possible, the most recently available data were analyzed.

Number of Artists and Other Cultural Workers

Regardless of occupation, over 5 million workers are employed in arts and cultural industries. They are all wage-and-salary workers.

- There are nearly 2.5 million artists in the U.S. labor force (either self-employed or wage-and-salary workers).
- Approximately 333,000 (self-employed or wage-and-salary) workers hold secondary jobs as artists.
- Another 1.2 million (self-employed or wage-and-salary) workers hold a primary job in a cultural occupation other than artist.
- They are workers whose primary job is as an artist in one of the occupations listed below.

Figure ES1. Number of artists in the labor force: 2017
(in thousands)

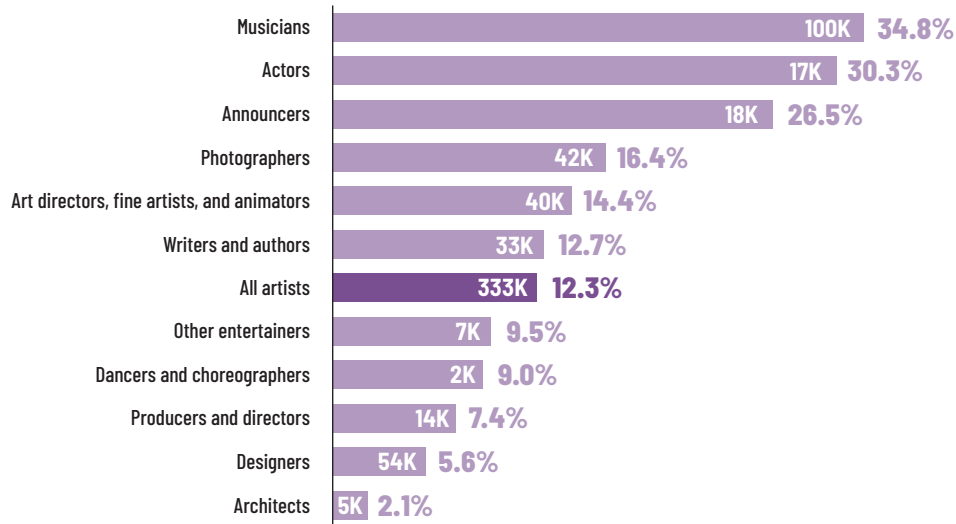


Source: Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed occupation; Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Number of workers who hold a secondary job as an artist:

- An estimated 333,000 workers hold secondary jobs as artists.
- More than half of these workers (56 percent) have a primary job in one of the following industries: healthcare and education; leisure and hospitality; and “professional” services, a category that includes advertising and photographic services.
- Relatively large shares of musicians, actors, and writers and editors are employed in these capacities as a second job.

Figure ES2. Percent of artists, by occupation, who hold the occupation as a second job: 2017
(K=thousands of workers holding a secondary job in this occupation)



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Estimates were calculated by the Office of Research & Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts.

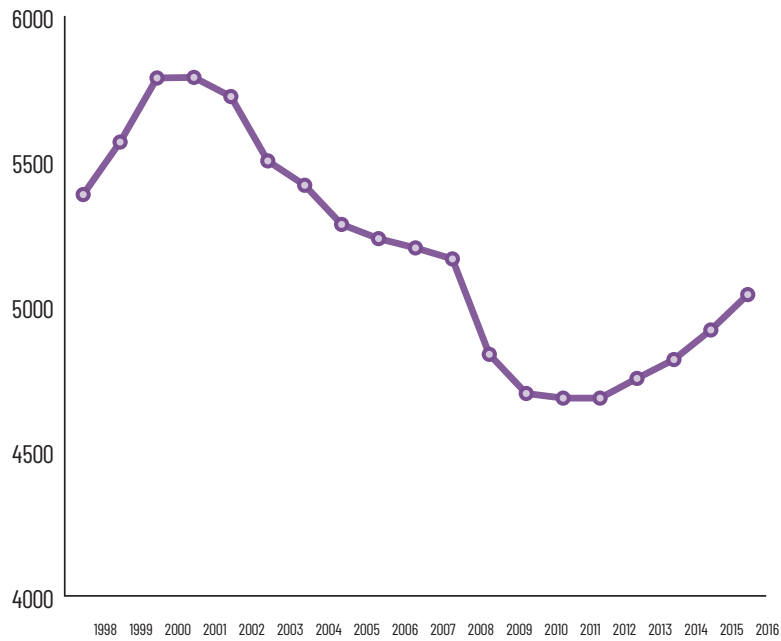
Number of workers who hold a job in another cultural occupation:

- In addition to the 2.5 million workers whose primary job is as an artist, there are nearly 1.2 million workers whose primary job is in another cultural occupation.
- Librarians, editors, and printing press operators constitute the largest numbers.
- The number of archivists, curators, and museum technicians grew from 42,000 in 2006 to 61,000 in 2017—a gain of 45 percent.
- The job of processing photographs is a declining occupation. Between 2006 and 2017, the labor market shed 33,000 workers in that category.

Total number and trends of workers employed in arts and cultural industries:

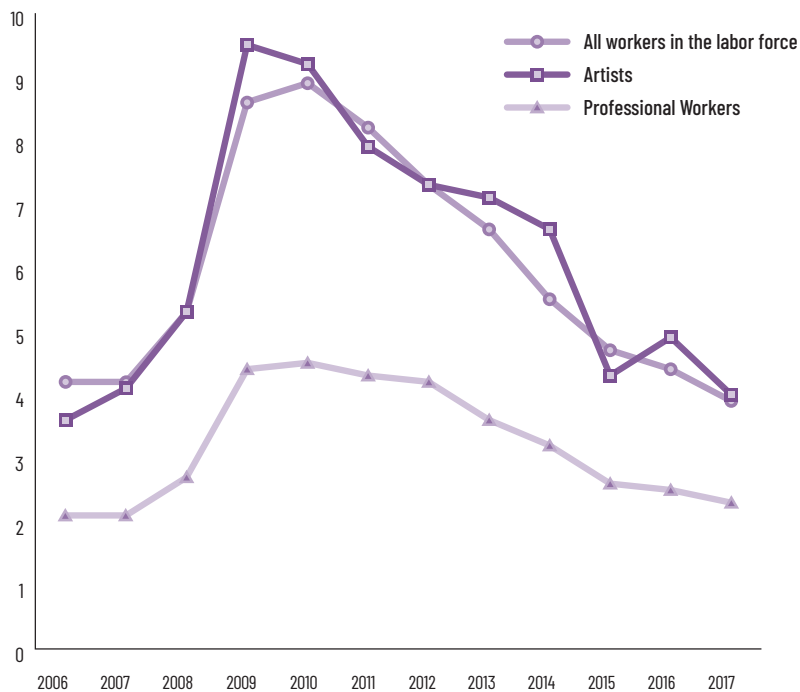
- Regardless of their occupation, over 5 million workers are employed in arts and cultural industries.
- Although rising in recent years, the number of workers employed to produce arts and cultural goods and services is below the peak observed in 2001.
- In that year, arts and cultural employment reached 5.8 million, or 749,000 more workers than the arts economy employed in 2016, the most recent year for which data are reported.
- Artists are becoming a larger share of the U.S. labor force.
 - In 2006, artists composed 1.42 percent of the labor force; by 2017, they were 1.55 percent, representing a 6.1 percent increase.
- In 2017, the artist unemployment rate hit an 11-year low.
- As a group, artists currently experience unemployment rates similar to those of all U.S. workers.

Figure ES3. Arts and cultural employment: 1998-2016



Source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts

Figure ES4. Unemployment rates for artists, professional workers, and all workers in the labor force: 2006-2017



Note: "Professional" workers hold a variety of occupations that usually require college or other specialized training.

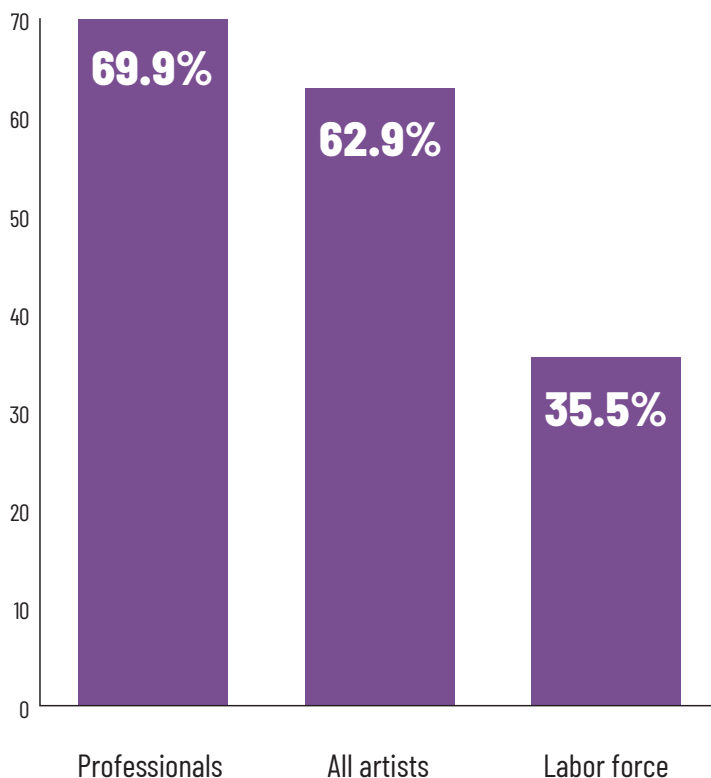
Source: Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed occupation, Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Education Level of Artists

Artists are 1.8 times as likely as other workers to hold a college degree.

- 63 percent of all artists (aged 25 and older) hold bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education. By comparison, 36 percent of all workers in the labor force hold college degrees.
- 90 percent of architects, and 83 percent of writers and authors, have at least a bachelor's degree.
- At the other end of the scale, 27 percent of dancers/choreographers are college-educated.

Figure ES5. Percent of professionals, artists, and all U.S. workers with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education: 2012–2016



Note: The data refer to workers aged 25 and older. "Professionals" hold a variety of occupations that usually require college or other specialized training.
Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, 2012–2016: U.S. Census Bureau

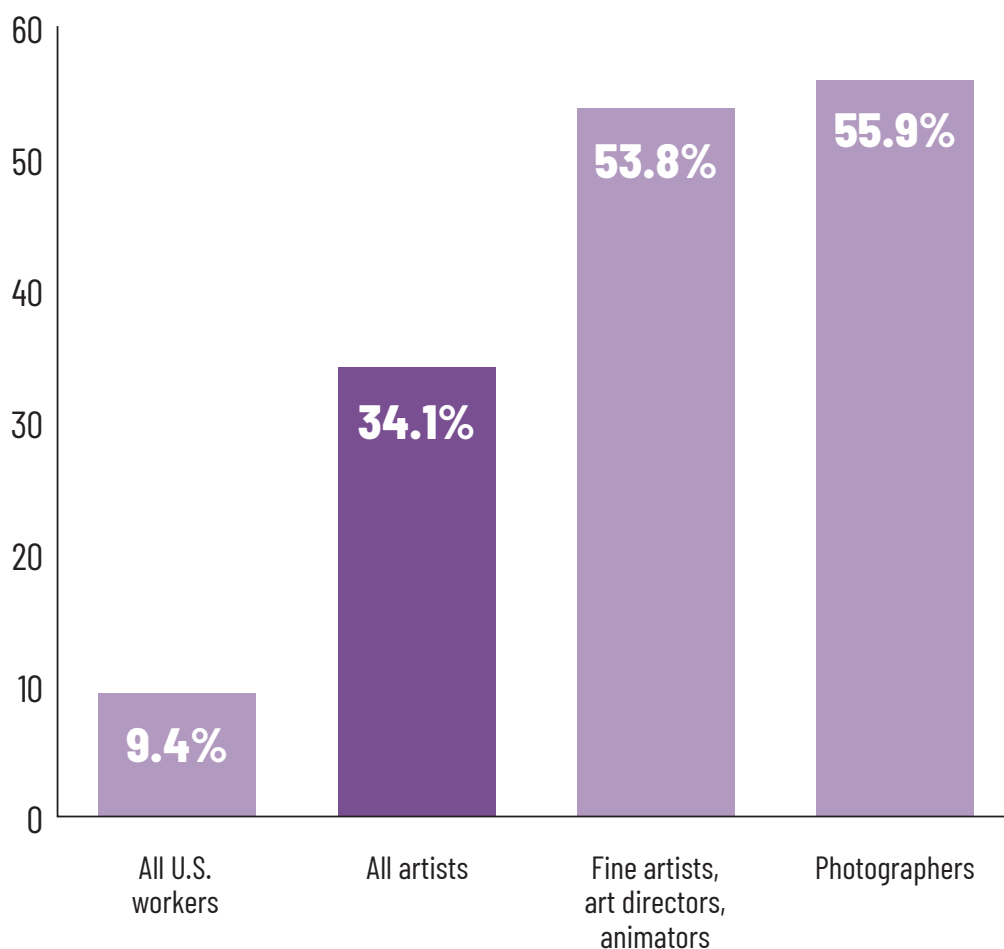
Artists and Levels of Self-Employment

Artists are 3.6 times as likely as other workers to be self-employed.

- In 2012–2016, roughly 34 percent of all artists were self-employed. This compares with 9 percent of all workers.
- Self-employment rates exceed 50 percent for fine artists and photographers.
- Most self-employed artists seem to like their work arrangement: 79 percent say they would not prefer to work for someone else, while 58 percent cite flexible schedules and independence as the main reasons they are self-employed.



Figure ES6. Percent self-employed: 2012–2016



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, 2012–2016: U.S. Census Bureau

Income and Earnings of Artists

Compared with U.S. workers as a whole, artists are less likely to be poor.

- The average artist's income is 4.4 times greater than his or her official poverty threshold of income.
- By contrast, income earned by the average U.S. worker is 3.7 times greater than amount needed to avoid poverty.
- Artists working full-year/full-time earn an annual average of \$52,800.
- Annually, artists earn nearly \$8,200 more than the average worker earns.
- With average annual earnings of \$65,000 to \$75,000, producers/directors and architects are the best-paid artists.
- Dancers/choreographers (who earn an annual average of \$31,200) and actors (who typically earn annual wages and salaries of \$38,500) are among the lowest-paid artists.
- Women artists earn \$0.77 for every dollar men artists earn.

Projections for Changes in Various Artist Occupations

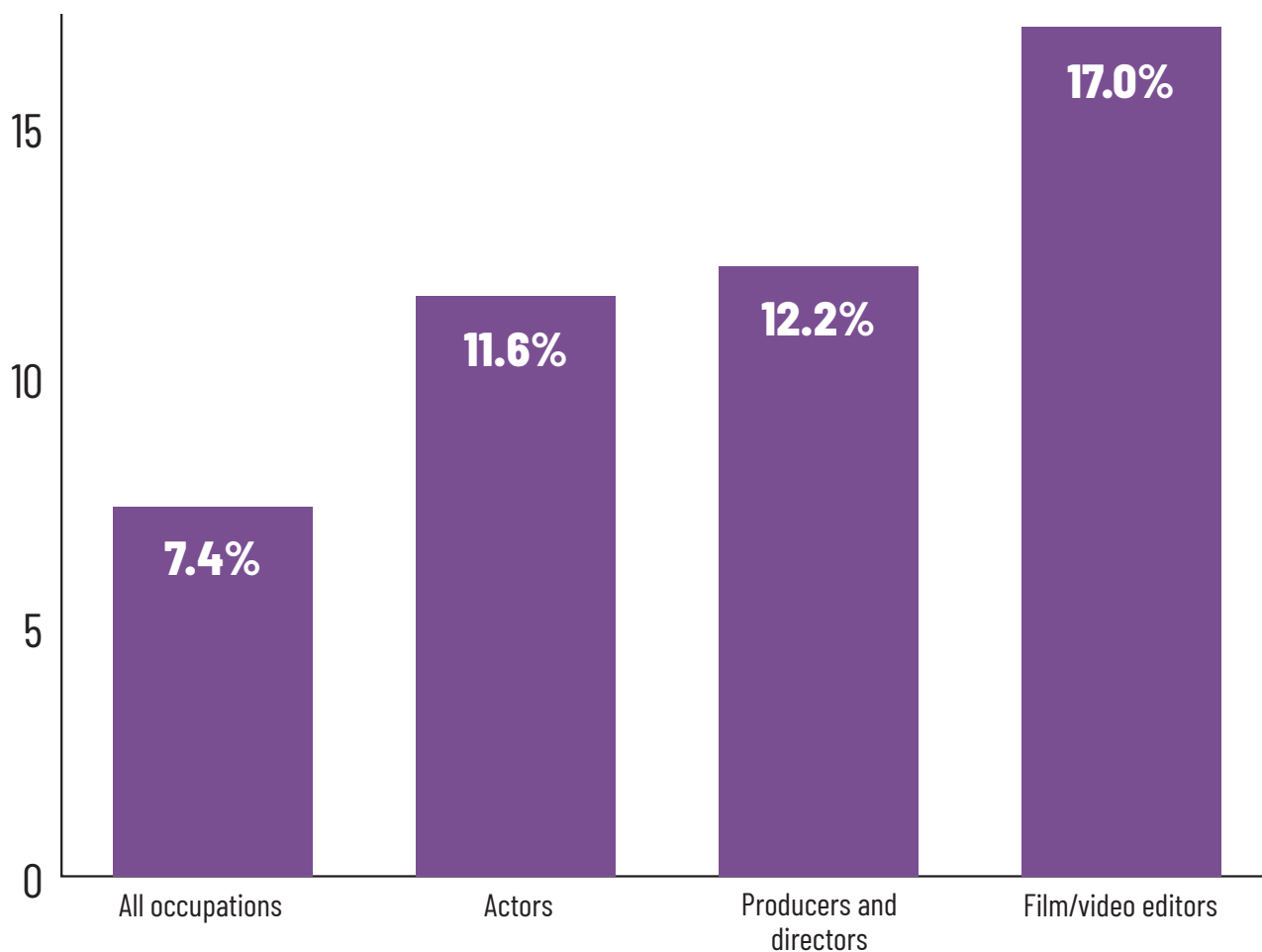
Faster-than-average growth in employment is predicted for set and exhibit designers, actors, producers and directors, and film and video editors.

- Between 2016 and 2026, annual job openings will have averaged 7,400 for actors and 14,100 for producers and directors. Employment growth in these occupations stems from strong demand for new movies and television shows.
- Employment of film/video editors is projected to grow at a 17 percent clip. A contributing factor is the number of shows increasingly produced by Internet-only sources and streaming services.

The number of employed photographers is projected to fall by 5.6 percent.

- Annually, between 2016 and 2026, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects an average of 11,100 photographers either to leave the labor market altogether or to take jobs in other occupations.
- Employment in photographic processing jobs is projected to decline by 18.1 percent.

Figure ES7. Projected percent change in employment: 2016–2026
Selected fast-growing arts and cultural occupations



Source: Employment Projections, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Overview of Methods and Data

Data Sources

This report draws on several data sources to enumerate and describe the labor force of artists and other cultural workers. These data, in turn, were collected by using different methodologies and targeting different segments of the U.S. labor market. Consequently, counts of artists or other cultural workers—and their characteristics—vary from one source to the next.

Below is a listing of the data sources used in this report, by chapter:

Chapter I: Employment Trends: This chapter uses data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' **Current Population Survey (CPS)** for 2006–2017. The CPS is a monthly survey of 60,000 U.S. households. It provides a comprehensive body of data on the total labor force and employment, and unemployment. Because it is a household survey, the CPS captures self-employed workers, and it is this report's source for statistics on multiple jobholders.

Estimates from the CPS, released monthly, are the official federal government source of employment and unemployment. **In this report, annual averages from the CPS are used to identify the number of workers, including artists and cultural workers, in the U.S. labor market.**

The timeframe covered by this report, 2006–2017, reveals the artist labor force before the Great Recession of 2007–2009, and the subsequent economic recovery and expansion years of 2010–2017.

Chapter II: Demographic and Other Characteristics: Demographic characteristics were based on data from the **American Community Survey (ACS)**, produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. A rolling survey, the ACS polls more than three million households and reports a response rate of roughly 95 percent. In addition to household units, the ACS also surveys group quarters. The estimates shown in this report were based on the 2012–2016 ACS PUMS (Public Use Microdata Sample).

The U.S. Census Bureau released its first five-year ACS estimates in 2010. Since then, it has been the premier source of detailed information about demographics, occupations, and many other characteristics of the U.S. population.

The 2012–2016 ACS dataset is the most current available at the time of this writing. The National Endowment for the Arts analyzed two previous waves of the ACS. In 2011, the agency released *Artists and Art Workers in the United States: Findings from the American Community Survey (2005–2009)* and the *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (2010)*. In 2013, the Arts Endowment released *Equal Opportunity Data Mining: National Statistics about Working Artists*, an Arts Data Profile using the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) special tabulations of the 2006–2010 ACS.

Chapter III. Self-Employment: More than one-third of artists are self-employed, and self-employment is even more common among fine artists and photographers. This chapter uses data from the American Community Survey (2012–2016) to explore this work status for artists and cultural workers.

The analysis is supplemented with findings from the 2017 **Contingent Workers Survey (CWS)**, produced by the U.S. Census Bureau in partnership with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Prior to this recent release, the CWS was last done in 2005.

Chapter IV: Income and Earnings: Chapter IV draws on data from both the American Community Survey (ACS) for 2012–2016 and the BLS' **Occupation Employment Survey (OES)** for 2017. The OES program collects data on wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in order to produce employment and wage estimates for 800 occupations.

Chapter V: Career Outlook: The **National Employment Matrix Database** is produced by the BLS and is used by the agency's Employment Projections program. The Matrix is the basis for the agency's widely known source of career information, the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Current estimates track projected changes in employment between 2016 and 2026. Like OES data, BLS' Matrix provides more occupational detail than either the CPS or the ACS.

Summary of datasets used in this report:

	Current Population Survey	Contingent Worker Survey	Occupation Employment Survey	American Community Survey	National Employment Matrix	Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account
Source of Data	Census/BLS	Census/BLS	BLS	Census	BLS	BEA/NEA
Years covered in this report	2006-2017	2017	2017	2012-2016	2016-2026	2006-2015
Key characteristics						
Timely employment/ unemployment data	×		×			×
Household survey	×	×		×		
Administrative, business survey, or calculated data			×		×	×
Year-over-year trend analysis	×		×			×
Large sample size			×	×		
Captures multiple jobholding	×					
Captures self-employed workers	×	×		×	×	*
Detailed demographics				×		
Detailed occupations			×		×	
Earnings data	×	×	×	×	×	×
Detailed industry			×		×	×
Detailed data on the self-employed and other contingent workers		×				
Employment projections					×	

* The ACPSA counts the earnings of self-employed workers as value added.

Key

Census: U.S. Census Bureau

BLS: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

BEA: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

NEA: National Endowment for the Arts

Artist and Other Cultural Occupations

This report mines federal data sources to examine workers in Arts Endowment-defined artist and cultural occupations.

All 11 artist occupations are counted as “professionals,” a broad occupation category describing jobs that typically require college or other specialized training.¹ In addition to artists, professional occupations include doctors, lawyers, engineers, clergy, and teachers.

The additional 16 cultural occupations span an even wider occupational scale. These workers include professionals such as librarians, editors, and curators, as well as service occupations (e.g., theatrical makeup artists and motion picture projectionists), and production occupations (e.g., printing press operators and molders/casters).

The artist and other cultural occupations described here reflect those outlined in the 2013 report, *NEA Guide to the U.S. Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account, Including a Blueprint for Capturing the Economic Value of Arts and Cultural Workers and Volunteers*.

Below is a list of the artist and other cultural occupations examined in this report. For more information, please see the Key to Artist and Other Cultural Occupations.

Artist Occupations:

Architects; fine artists, art directors, and animators; designers; actors; producers and directors; dancers and choreographers; musicians; “other entertainers”; announcers; writers and authors; and photographers.

Other Cultural Occupations:

Archivists, curators, and museum technicians; librarians; library technicians; editors; broadcast and sound engineering technicians; television, video, and motion picture camera operators and editors; motion picture projectionists; ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket-takers; tour and travel guides; models and demonstrators; printing press operators; print binding and finishing workers; jewelers and precious stone- and metal-workers; photographic process workers; etchers and engravers; and molders, shapers, and casters.

Chapters IV and V, which use data sources containing more occupation detail, also report estimates for forest and conservation technicians, musical instrument repairers and tuners, and desktop publishers. The occupational data reported in the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey—used in Chapters I, II, and III—are not sufficiently detailed to report separate estimates for these occupations.

The CPS and ACS, for example, report estimates for “miscellaneous life, physical, and social science technicians,” an occupation group that includes not only forest and conservation technicians, but also forensic science technicians and environmental science and protection technicians—two occupations unrelated to the production of cultural goods and services.

Similarly, in the CPS and ACS, musical instrument repairers are subsumed within “precision instrument and equipment repairers,” and desktop publishers are included among “miscellaneous office and administrative support workers.”

Acronyms Used in This Report

Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA)
American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (ACS PUMS)
Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)
Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
Contingent Worker Survey (CWS)
Current Population Survey (CPS)
Music Industry Research Association (MIRA)
Occupation Employment Survey (OES)

¹ As defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “professional” occupations are concerned with the study, application, and/or administration of physical, mathematical, scientific, engineering, architectural, social, medical, legal statute, biological, behavioral, library, and/or religious laws, principles, practices or theories. Some occupations are concerned with interpreting, informing, expressing, or promoting ideas, products, etc. by written, artistic, sound, or physical mediums. Most professional occupations require educational preparation.

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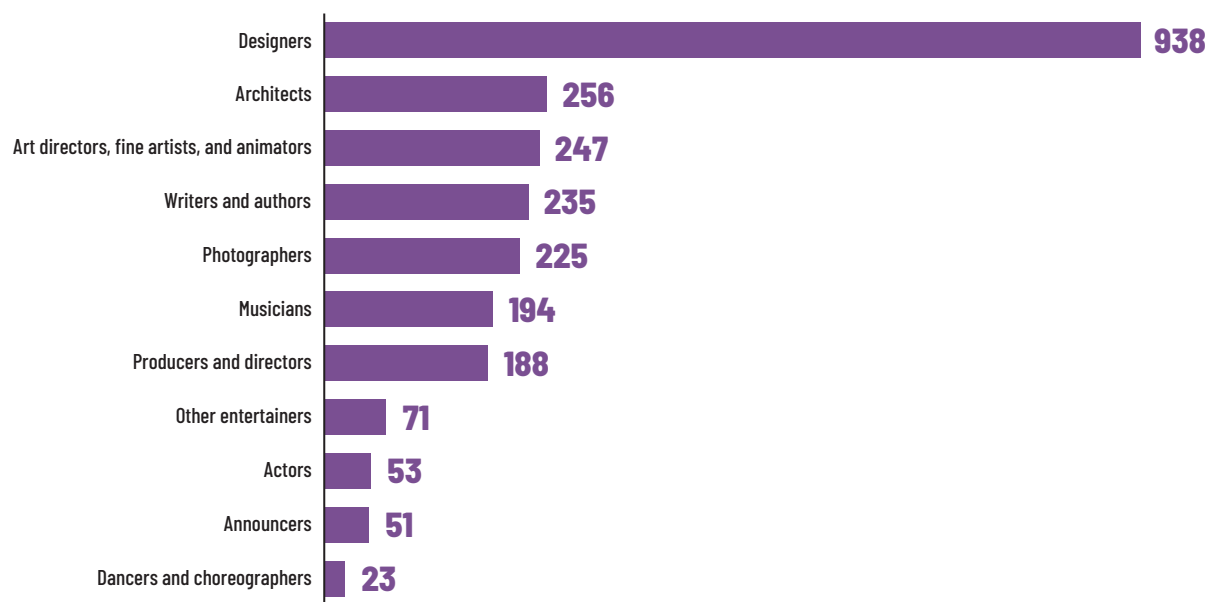
Chapter I. Employment Trends

In 2017, nearly 2.5 million artists were in the U.S. labor force.² They fall into 11 distinct occupational groups, which vary greatly by many characteristics, including the number of workers in each group.

Industrial, fashion, graphic, and interior designers (among other designer occupations) compose the single largest occupational group among all working artists. By that measure, dancers and choreographers are the smallest group. In 2017, designers accounted for 938,000 of all U.S. workers (39 percent of all artists); dancers and choreographers totaled 23,000.

The artist labor force also includes 256,000 architects, 247,000 fine artists (a.k.a., “art directors, fine artists, and animators”), 235,000 writers and authors, 225,000 photographers, 194,000 musicians, 188,000 producers and directors, and 53,000 actors.

Figure 1a. Number of artists in the labor force: 2017
(in thousands)



Source: Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed occupation; Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

² The labor force includes both employed and unemployed workers.

Artist Labor Force Trends: 2006-2017

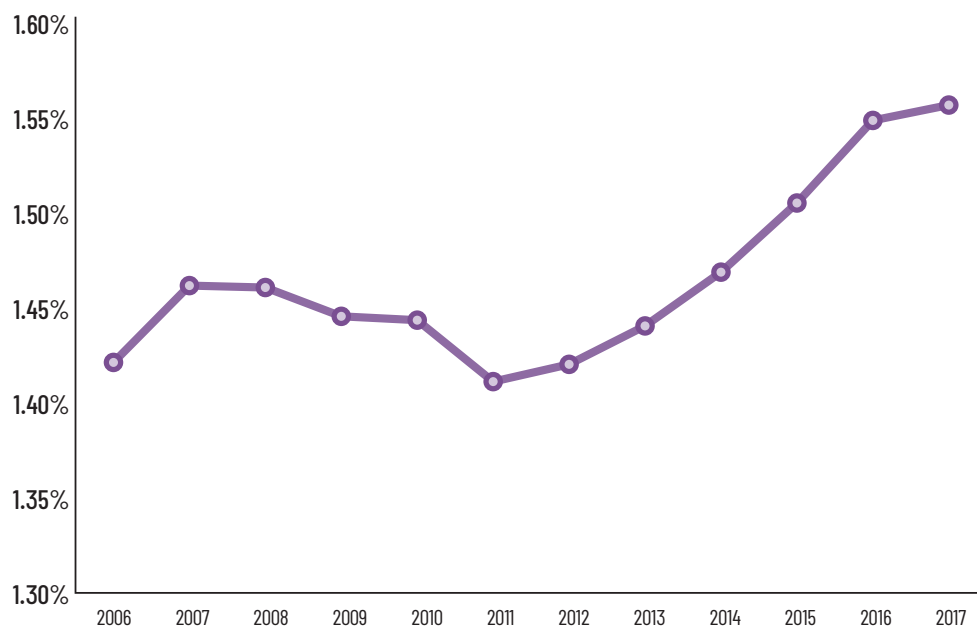
Increasingly, artists are becoming a larger share of the U.S. labor force.

In 2006, artists constituted 1.42 percent of all workers. In 2007 and 2008, that share inched up to 1.46 percent.

Coinciding with the severe U.S. recession of 2007-09 (and its long aftermath), the number of artists, as a share of the labor force, softened, and then dipped sharply—in 2011, artists were just 1.41 percent of all U.S. workers.

By 2013, however, a reversal was well underway. In that year, artists again composed 1.44 percent of the labor force. Their share continued to climb, and by 2016 and 2017, it reached 1.55 percent.

Figure 1b. Artists as a share of the U.S. labor force: 2006-2017



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

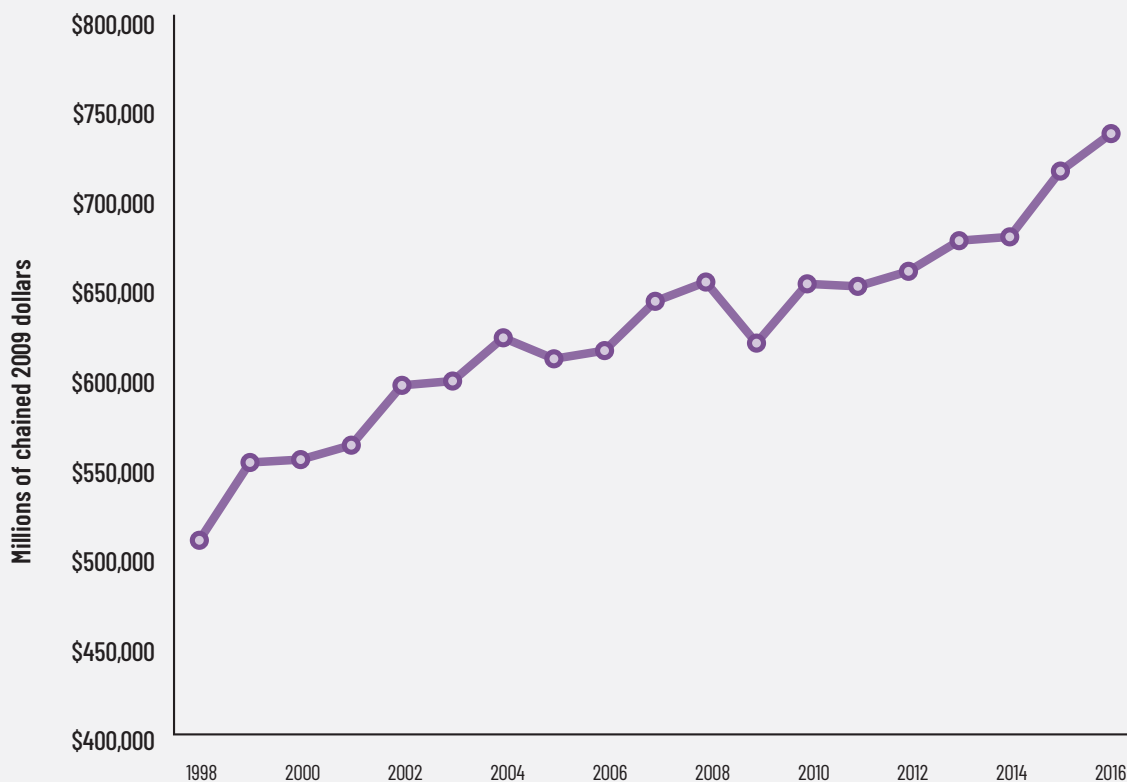
A CLOSER LOOK: TRENDS IN ARTS AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Rising shares of artists in the overall workforce has co-occurred with growth in production of arts and cultural goods and services.

As measured by the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA)—a public resource that is maintained by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis—"real" (i.e., inflation-adjusted) production of arts and cultural goods and services increased over the 2006-2016 timeframe. Such commodities include everything from performing arts presentations and museum exhibits, to movies, TV shows, and the creative components of advertising. (Production dipped in 2009, the last official year of the Great Recession.)

This parallel phenomenon suggests that, holding other factors constant, as the arts economy grows, so too does the need for artists, who represent a majority of workers in many arts and cultural industries. In 2017, for example, workers in arts, design, entertainment, and media occupations made up more than 40 percent of all workers employed by performing arts companies.

Figure 1c. Real value added by arts and culture: 1998-2016



Source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts

Trends in Artist Unemployment

Unemployment rates among artists have tracked largely similar to those of all workers in the labor force, but they are higher than rates reported for “professional workers,” a term used to describe a wide variety of occupations that typically require college or other specialized training. In addition to artists, professional occupations include lawyers, doctors, teachers, and clergy.

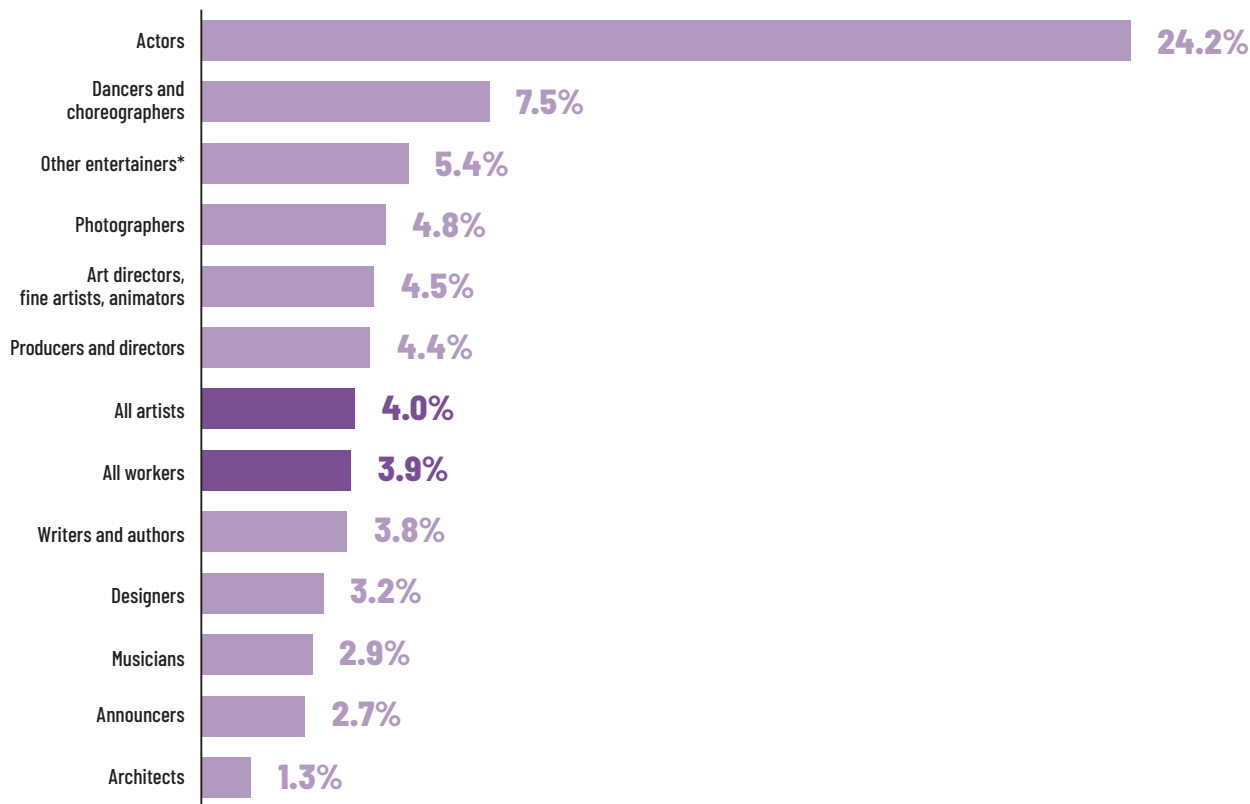
In 2017, the artist unemployment rate hit an 11-year low of 4 percent, a rate similar to the 3.9 percent figure reported for all U.S. workers. The unemployment rate for professionals, however, was just 2.3 percent.

Among artists, actors report by far the highest unemployment rates. In 2017, 24.2 percent of actors were unemployed. On the other end of the scale are architects—just 1.3 percent were unemployed.

Unemployment rates for all workers, for professionals, and for artists peaked in 2009-10, then steadily declined as the U.S. economy recovered and then expanded following the Great Recession.

This pattern is also evident among workers in specific artist occupations. For example, the greatest share of actors unemployed throughout this period was 38.5 percent, in 2010. For architects, the unemployment rate peaked in 2009, at 10.8 percent.

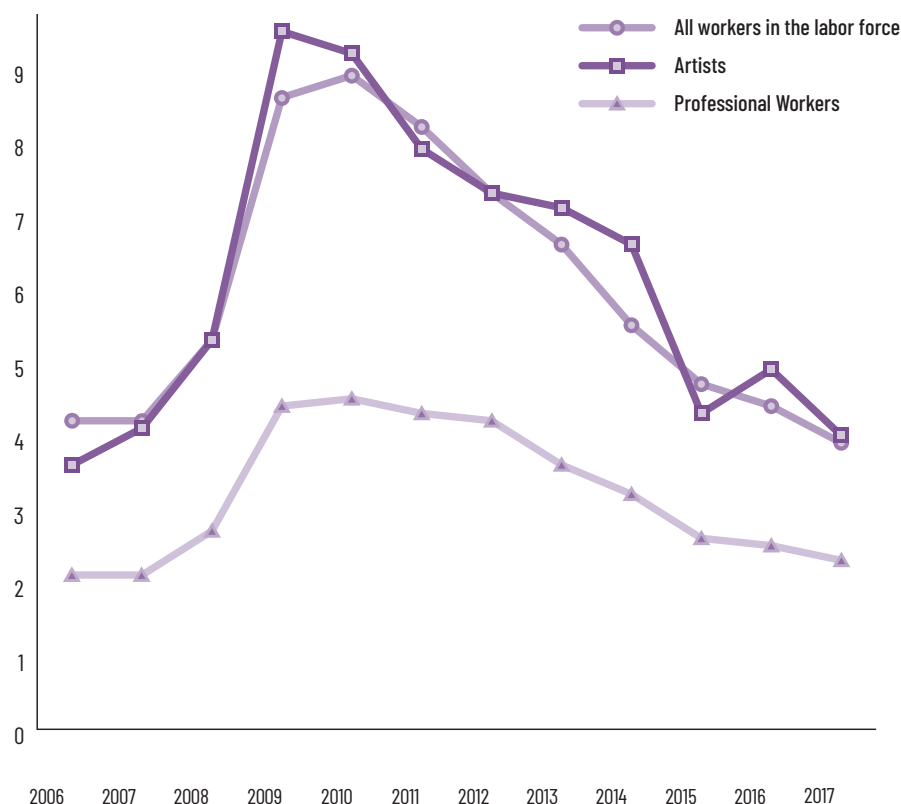
Figure 1d. Unemployment rates: 2017



* Includes acrobats, jugglers, and magicians.

Source: Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed occupation, Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 1e. Unemployment rates for artists, professional workers, and all workers in the labor force: 2006–2017



Note: "Professional" workers hold a variety of occupations that usually require college or other specialized training.
Source: Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed occupation, Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Workers Who Moonlight as Artists

In 2017, 2.4 million workers were employed as artists in their primary occupation (the job at which the individual worked the greatest number of hours). That same year, an estimated 333,000 workers held second jobs as artists.

The number of these moonlighting artists (the 333,000) adds roughly 12 percent to the tally of artist employment, yielding a grand total of 2.7 million workers whose primary or secondary job is as an artist.

Of the 11 specific artist occupations, musicians compose the greatest number of moonlighting artists. In 2017, an estimated 100,000 workers held second jobs as musicians. An additional 54,000 workers held second jobs as designers.

Looked at another way, more than one-third of all musician jobs are second jobs. A similarly high share is estimated for acting positions—30 percent are second jobs.

The relatively small number of moonlighting artists makes it difficult to ascertain in detail their primary occupations. Even so, the Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau) provides general information about moonlighters' day jobs.

To illustrate, 47 percent of moonlighting artists hold primary jobs in "professional occupations," a broad category describing jobs that typically require a college education or other specialized training. These include doctors, lawyers, clergy, teachers, and artists.

For almost 30 percent of workers holding second jobs as artists, their primary work is in educational and health services industries; 15 percent hold primary jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector.

Also, workers holding second jobs as artists are very likely to be self-employed. In 2017, nearly 60 percent of moonlighting artists were self-employed versus roughly one-third of primary artists.³ Compared with primary artists, workers holding second jobs as artists are also more likely to work for nonprofit organizations.

These results suggest that many moonlighting artists hold primary jobs as teachers and as artists (two professional occupations populating the educational and leisure industries), and that they are often self-employed in their second jobs as artists.

Table 1. Primary and secondary employment in artist occupations: 2017
(Numbers in thousands)

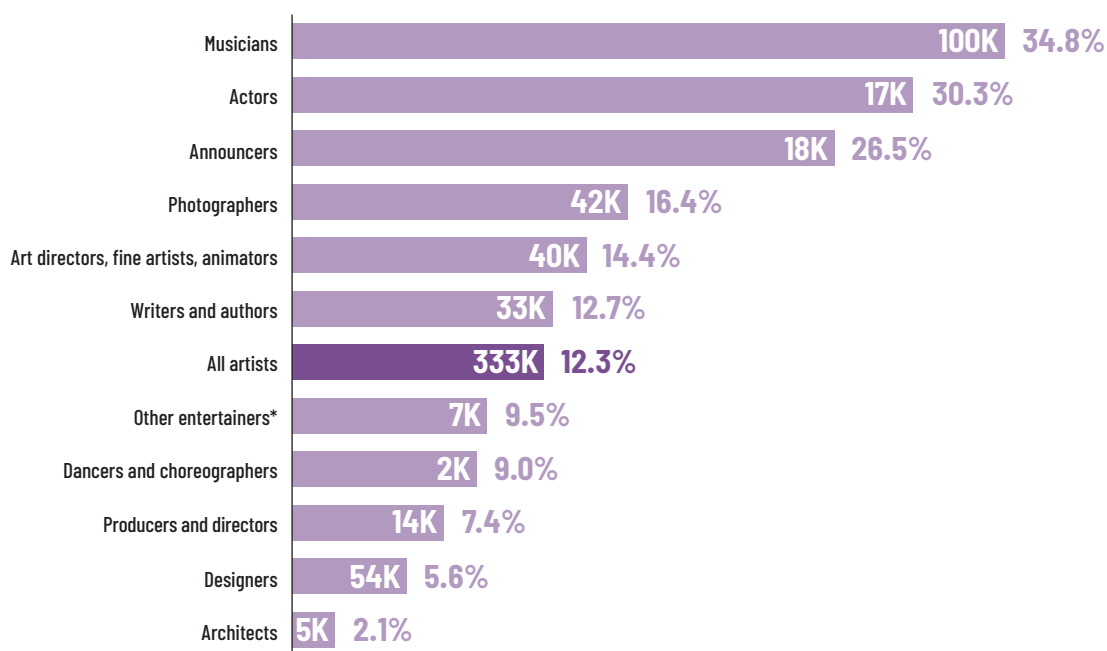
	ANNUAL AVERAGES:			
	EMPLOYMENT			
	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY JOBS	SECONDARY JOB AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL JOBS
All artist occupations	2,383	333	2,716	12.3%
Musicians	188	100	288	34.8%
Designers	908	54	962	5.6%
Photographers	214	42	256	16.4%
Art directors, fine artists, and animators	236	40	276	14.4%
Writers and authors	226	33	259	12.7%
Announcers	50	18	68	26.5%
Actors	40	17	57	30.3%
Producers and directors	180	14	194	7.4%
Other entertainers	67	7	74	9.5%
Architects	253	5	258	2.1%
Dancers and choreographers	21	2	23	9.0%

Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Annual averages of secondary employment were calculated by the Office of Research & Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts

³ For more information on self-employed artists, please see Chapter II of this report, Demographic and Other Characteristics. That section uses data from the American Community Survey, which indicates that 34 percent of primary artists were self-employed during the 2012-2016 time period.

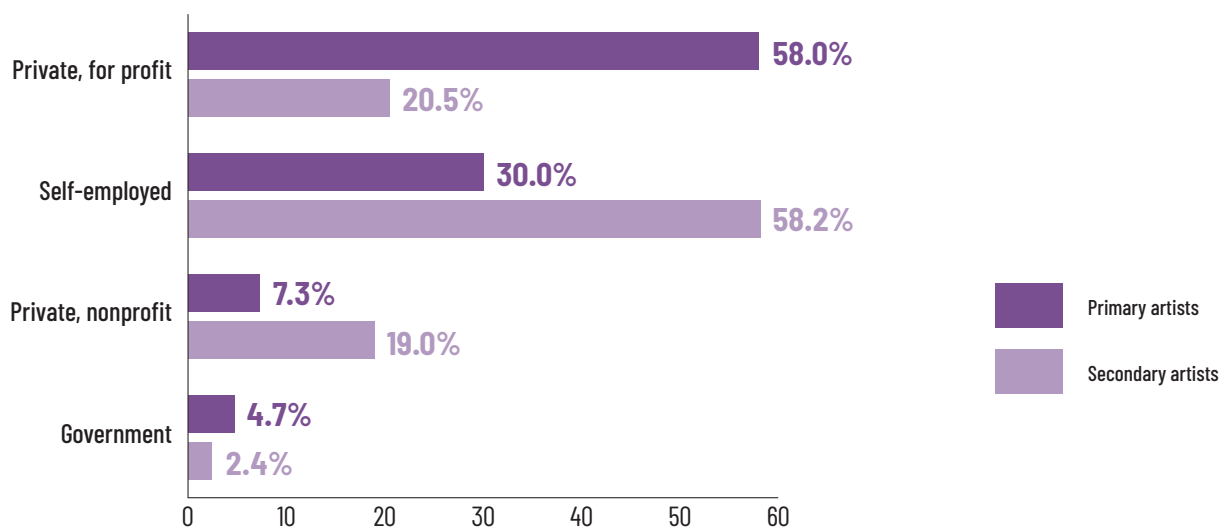
Figure 1f. Percent of artists, by occupation, who hold the occupation as a second job: 2017
(K= thousands of workers holding a second job in this occupation)



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Estimates were calculated by the Office of Research & Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts

Figure 1g. Percent of artists by class of worker: 2017



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Other Cultural Workers

The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), produced jointly by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Endowment for the Arts, identifies approximately 35 industries that produce arts and cultural goods and services. These industries include performing arts companies and museums, design services, motion picture and sound recording industries, and arts-related manufacturing such as the manufacture of jewelry and musical instruments.

While most of these industries employ artists, they also staff other cultural workers. For example, in 2017, the motion picture and video industry employed 43,150 producers and directors and 9,450 multimedia artists and animators. (Producers and directors and multimedia artists and animators are counted among the 11 artist occupations defined by the National Endowment for the Arts.)

However, the motion picture and video industry also employed 22,500 film editors and 3,870 sound engineering technicians.

Apart from the 11 occupational categories of artists, there are nearly 1.2 million workers in 16 other Arts Endowment-defined “cultural” occupations. They span occupations as varied as librarians, motion picture projectionists, and jewelers and precious stone- and metal-workers.

Based on 2017 labor force figures, the most numerous of these workers are librarians (196,000), editors (180,000), printing press operators (178,000), and broadcast and sound engineering technicians (122,000).

Alternatively, relatively few workers are employed as print-binding and finishing workers (12,000), etchers and engravers (11,000), and motion picture projectionists (2,000).

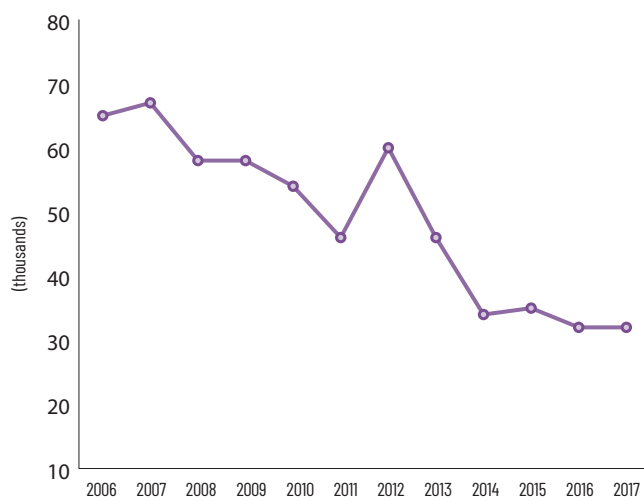
Notably, labor force trends for these other cultural workers often resemble trends in artist occupations. Despite business cycle fluctuations, cultural occupations are generally adding workers. For example, in 2006 there were 42,000 archivists, curators, and museum technicians in the U.S. labor force. Although the number of workers in that occupation dropped in 2008, thereafter it trended upward to 61,000 workers in 2017.

Other cultural occupations that grew in number during the 2006–2017 time period include editors (up 18,000); broadcast and sound engineering technicians (up 30,000); and television, video, and motion picture camera operators/editors (up 50,000).

Still, some cultural occupations have shed workers. Between 2006 and 2017, for example, the number of printing press operators in the labor market fell by 41,000; the number of photographic process workers was reduced by 33,000.

In each of these occupations, the labor force declines have been fairly steady throughout the 2006–2017 period. Moreover, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects employment to fall by 10.4 percent and 18.1 percent for printing press operators and photographic processing workers, respectively, between 2016 and 2026.⁴

Figure 1h. Number of photographic processing workers in the U.S. labor force: 2006–2017



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

⁴ See Chapter V, Career Outlook.

Chapter II. Demographic and Other Characteristics

This section uses data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to examine demographic and other characteristics of artists and other cultural workers. The data reflect the 2012-2016 timeframe.

Gender, Age, and Marital Status

Similar to the workforce as a whole, artists are distributed more or less evenly by gender (46 percent are female). Yet individual occupations show wide disparities: 81 percent of all dancers/choreographers are women, as are almost 59 percent of writers/authors. Meanwhile, men compose nearly 75 percent of architects—the best-paying artist occupation—and 67 percent of musicians.

In 2012-2016, 85 percent of librarians were women.

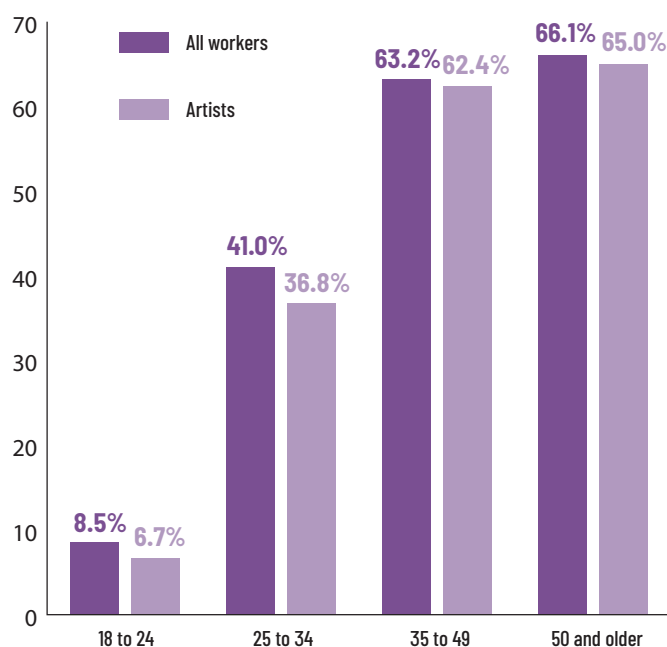
Possessing a median age of 41 years old in 2012-2016, artists are typically the same age as all workers in the labor force. Among workers in specific artist occupations, however, that age varies (see Table 2a).

On average, architects and musicians are among the oldest artists. In 2012-2016, they were, on average, 45 years old. Fine artists, art directors, and animators, as well as writers and authors, are nearly as old—typically 44 during that time period.

Alternatively, dancers and choreographers are 15 years younger, on average, than the typical artist. In 2012-2016, the median age for dancers was just 26. At median ages of 34 and 37, “other entertainers” and actors, respectively, are also younger than most artists.

Among other cultural workers, the youngest are ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket-takers (median age 25) and motion picture projectionists (median age 27).

Figure 2a. Percent married by age group, all workers and artists: 2012-2016



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) PUMS, 2012-2016, U.S. Census Bureau

The oldest workers in cultural occupations are librarians, print-binding and finishing workers, and jewelers and precious stone- and metal-workers. Workers in all three occupations were, on average, 48-49 during the 2012-2016 time period.

Nearly 52 percent of all artists, as well as all workers in the labor force, are married.

Among workers in specific artist occupations, the percentage married is greatest for architects—67 percent in 2012-2016. Alternatively, just 19 percent of dancers and choreographers are married.

The percent married is also comparatively low for actors and for entertainers—34 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

High percentages of librarians and jewelers or precious stone- or metal-workers are married (roughly 60 percent), while low percentages of ushers or lobby attendants or ticket-takers are (20 percent).

As evident among all workers, the share of artists and other cultural workers who are married rises with age. For example, the high percentage of architects and librarians who are married is positively correlated with the older ages of workers in these occupations.

Similarly, dancers and ushers/ticket-takers are younger than many other artists and cultural workers, and the share married in these occupations is correspondingly lower.

Table 2a. Median age of artists: 2012–2016

LABOR FORCE	41
All professionals	42
All artists	41
Dancers and choreographers	26
Other entertainers	34
Actors	37
Photographers	38
Producers and directors	39
Designers	40
Announcers	40
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	44
Writers and authors	44
Architects	45
Musicians	45

Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, 2012-2016, U.S. Census Bureau

A CLOSER LOOK: INDEX OF DISSIMILARITY BY GENDER

Gender disparity in occupations is typically measured using the Index of Dissimilarity (ID), which is based on the absolute deviation in the percentages of men and women across occupations. In this case, the ID shows the percentage of men or women that would need to shift occupations for the two distributions to be equal.

Among artists tracked by the American Community Survey, the ID was 18 percent in 2012-2016, suggesting that 18 percent of women artists would need to switch artist occupations to match the percentage distribution by occupation of men artists.

Table 2b. Employed artists by occupation and gender: 2012-2016

	MEN		WOMEN	
	Number	Percent of all men artists employed in each occupation	Number	Percent of all women artists employed in each occupation
All artists	1,194,328	100.0%	1,033,556	100.0%
Architects	138,585	11.6%	47,272	4.6%
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	114,862	9.6%	92,426	8.9%
Designers	406,321	34.0%	467,001	45.2%
Actors	30,397	2.5%	24,690	2.4%
Producers and directors	101,380	8.5%	60,944	5.9%
Dancers and choreographers	4,346	0.4%	19,073	1.8%
Musicians	141,244	11.8%	70,003	6.8%
Other entertainers	25,803	2.2%	21,637	2.1%
Announcers	41,746	3.5%	11,428	1.1%
Writers and authors	96,534	8.1%	136,109	13.2%
Photographers	93,110	7.8%	82,973	8.0%

The index of dissimilarity across all artist occupations is 18 percent.
Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, 2012-2016, U.S. Census Bureau

Race/Ethnicity and Nativity

Artists are less likely than other workers to be of a minority race or ethnicity, or to be foreign-born. As with other demographic characteristics, the pattern varies by specific artist occupation.

In 2012–2016, nearly 36 percent of U.S. workers were non-white or Hispanic.⁵ For artists, that share was just under 25 percent. But 44 percent of dancers and choreographers and 33 percent of announcers were non-white or Hispanic.

During the five-year period, 13.4 percent of artists were foreign-born. That rate was more than three percentage points below the foreign-born share of all workers—16.7 percent. Still, certain types of artists are more likely to be foreign-born. The American Community Survey results show that 18.5 percent of architects were foreign-born, as were 15.5 percent of designers.

Among cultural workers, jewelers and precious stone- and metal-workers stand out as a comparatively diverse group. In 2012–2016, 41 percent were non-white or Hispanic and 37 percent were foreign-born.

A CLOSER LOOK: INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES AND JEWELRY

That so many architects and jewelers are foreign-born suggests an international element to architectural and jewelry commodities. Indeed, this element is revealed through the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA). Specifically, jewelry accounts for the largest U.S. arts and cultural *import*, \$14.8 billion in 2015.

On the other hand, according to the ACPSA, since 2006 the U.S. has tallied an ever-widening trade surplus in arts and cultural goods and services—the surplus reached nearly \$25 billion in 2016.

While movies and TV shows account for the largest share of U.S. arts and cultural exports, architectural services also rank as a leading arts export—\$2.1 billion in 2016.

The U.S. exports more architectural services than it does books (\$1.7 billion), newspapers and magazines (\$1.6 billion), and tours of performing arts groups (\$1.5 billion).

⁵ Non-white includes people of the following races: Hispanic (of any race); African American; Asian; American Indian or Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; some other race; and people of two or more races.

A CLOSER LOOK: INDEX OF DISSIMILARITY BY RACE/ETHNICITY

As with gender, racial/ethnic disparities in occupation can be measured by the Index of Dissimilarity (ID). In this case, the ID shows the percentage of whites and non-Hispanics or non-whites and Hispanics that would need to shift occupations for the two distributions to be equal.

Among artists tracked by the American Community Survey, the ID pertaining to race was 7.8 percent in 2012-2016, suggesting that 7.8 percent of non-white and Hispanic artists would need to switch artist occupations to match the percentage distribution by occupation of white/non-Hispanic artists.

Table 2c. Employed artists by occupation and race/ethnicity: 2012–2016

	NON-WHITE OR HISPANIC		WHITE, NON-HISPANIC	
	Number	Percent of all non-white artists employed in each occupation	Number	Percent of all white artists employed in each occupation
All artists	548,944	100.0%	1,678,940	100.0%
Architects	40,493	7.4%	145,364	8.7%
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	45,095	8.2%	162,193	9.7%
Designers	224,771	40.9%	648,551	38.6%
Actors	16,369	3.0%	38,718	2.3%
Producers and directors	39,105	7.1%	123,219	7.3%
Dancers and choreographers	10,316	1.9%	13,103	0.8%
Musicians	58,646	10.7%	152,601	9.1%
Other entertainers	13,765	2.5%	33,675	2.0%
Announcers	17,471	3.2%	35,703	2.1%
Writers and authors	39,153	7.1%	193,490	11.5%
Photographers	43,760	8.0%	132,323	7.9%

The index of dissimilarity across all artist occupations is 7.3 percent.
Non-white or Hispanic refers to Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, and people of other races.
Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, 2012–2016, U.S. Census Bureau

Educational Attainment

One of the most distinguishing features of artists is their high level of education. While 36 percent of all U.S. workers hold bachelor's degrees or higher levels of training, the percent of artists with college degrees is 63 percent—incidentally a share similar to that for all professional workers, a broad occupation group that typically includes professions requiring a college education or other specialized training.⁶

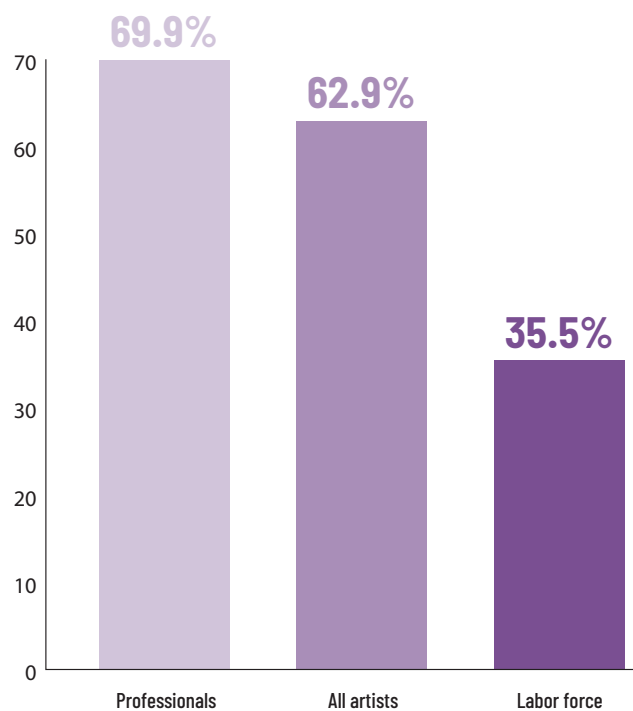
Architects, writers and authors, and producers and directors are among the best-educated artists. During the 2012-2016 period examined, 90 percent of architects held college degrees, as did 83 percent of writers and authors and 75 percent of producers and directors.

Alternatively, only 27 percent of dancers and choreographers hold bachelor's degrees or higher levels of college training. Moreover, the share of other entertainers and announcers who hold college degrees is also relatively low (roughly 40 percent of workers in both occupations).

Among other cultural workers, 80 percent or more of professionals in the following occupations hold bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education: archivists, curators, and museum technicians; librarians; and editors.

At the other end of this scale are printing-press operators and print-binding and finishing workers. Only 6-8 percent of workers in these positions are college-educated.

Figure 2b. Percent of professionals, artists, and all U.S. workers with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education: 2012-2016



Note: The data refer to workers aged 25 and older. "Professionals" hold a variety of occupations that usually require a college degree or other specialized training.
Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, 2012-2016: U.S. Census Bureau

Degrees in Arts Fields

Nearly one in every ten college-educated workers (9 percent, or 4.2 million adults) has majored in an arts-related field.⁷

English language and literature composes the single largest percentage of arts subject majors—1.4 million college-educated workers, or 2.9 percent of all workers holding bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education.

More than a half-million degree-holders majored in fine arts, while 477,000 majored in commercial art and graphic design.

Fine arts is the most common major among college-educated visual artists (a category that includes fine artists, art directors, and animators). Nearly 27 percent of visual artists holding bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education majored in the fine arts as undergraduates.

Other common undergraduate majors among artists include commercial art and graphic design (30 percent of designers), music (42 percent of musicians), and architecture (64 percent of architects).

Roughly 20 percent of college-educated writers and authors (and editors) majored in English language and literature.

Table 2d. Percent of U.S. labor force with selected arts-related degrees: 2012–2016

	NUMBER WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREES	PERCENT WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREES
Any arts-related field	4,248,405	8.8%
English language and literature	1,386,708	2.9%
Fine arts	554,892	1.2%
Commercial art and graphic design	476,667	1.0%
Music	375,667	0.8%
Architecture	369,003	0.8%
Art and music education	263,908	0.6%
Language and drama education	217,137	0.5%
Drama and theater arts	201,842	0.4%
Film, video, and photographic arts	140,307	0.3%
Art history and criticism	107,727	0.2%
Studio arts	84,859	0.2%
Visual and performing arts	59,750	0.1%
Miscellaneous fine arts	9,938	0.0%

Note: Reported for labor-force workers with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education, aged 25 and older.
Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, 2012–2016, U.S. Census Bureau

⁷ Estimates are for undergraduate degrees earned by workers aged 25 and older.

Table 2e. Bachelor's degrees most commonly earned by artists and selected cultural workers: 2012-2016

	PERCENT WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER LEVEL OF EDUCATION	MOST COMMON COLLEGE MAJOR
ARTISTS:		
Architects	90.2%	Architecture: 64.0%
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	58.1%	Fine arts: 26.2%
Designers	58.0%	Commercial art and graphic design: 30.1%
Actors	58.6%	Drama and theater arts: 27.1%
Producers and directors	74.6%	Communications: 14.2%
Dancers and choreographers	27.0%	Visual and performing arts: 30.0%
Musicians	54.3%	Music: 42.3%
Other entertainers	39.8%	Music: 12.5%
Announcers	38.0%	Communications: 19.4%
Writers and authors	83.4%	English language and literature: 17.3%
Photographers	50.5%	Film, video, and photographic arts: 14.6%
SELECTED CULTURAL WORKERS:		
Archivists, curators, and museum technicians	81.6%	History: 17.1%
Librarians	84.8%	English language and literature: 14.2%
Editors	81.9%	English language and literature: 20.1%
Broadcast and sound engineering technicians	35.9%	Communications: 10.4%
Television, video, and motion picture camera operators and editors	62.5%	Communications: 15.8% Film, video, and photographic arts: 15.7%

Note: Refers to workers aged 25 and older.

Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS: 2012-2016, U.S. Census Bureau

A CLOSER LOOK: TRENDS IN ART DEGREES CONFERRED

Using data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education) and the National Science Foundation, the American Academy of Arts & Sciences reports that the share of bachelor's degrees earned in the arts, relative to all bachelor's degrees awarded, has been rising.

In 1987, 3.4 percent of bachelor's degrees conferred were in the Academy-defined category labeled "fine and performing arts." In 2001, that share rose to 4.5 percent, and it has remained at or near 5 percent ever since.⁸

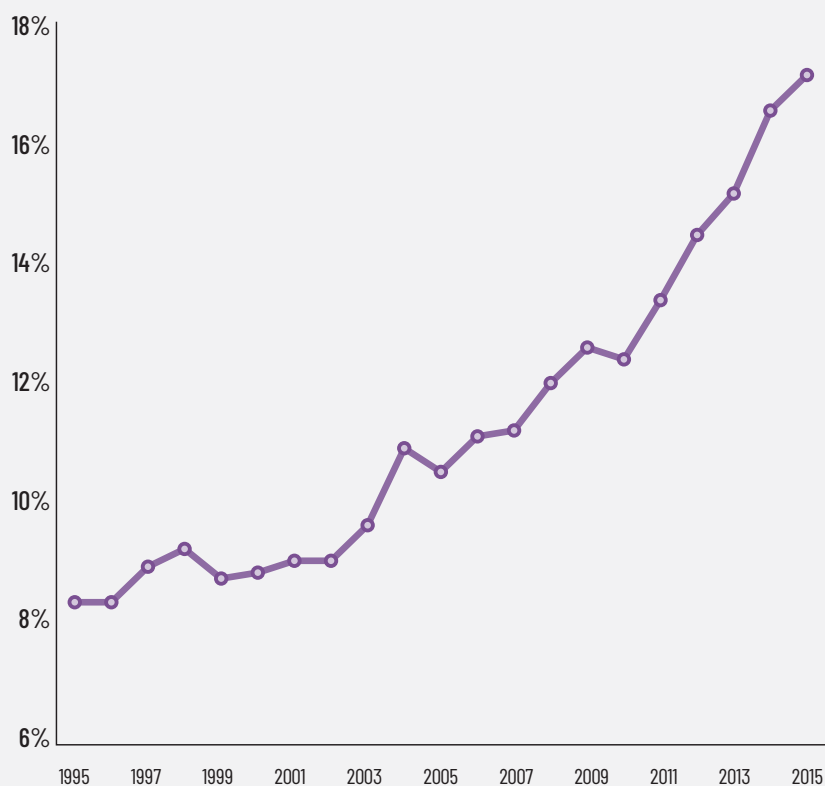
(The share of graduate degrees awarded in the arts has remained stable. Roughly 2 percent of all master's degrees awarded, and 2 percent of all doctorates conferred, are in fine and performing arts. This is as true today as it was in 1987.)

The Academy also reports growth in racial/ethnic and gender diversity among recipients of degrees in arts scholarship (a.k.a. "study of the arts") such as art history, musicology, and cinema studies.

Historically, women have earned a greater share of bachelor's degrees in the study of such disciplines. In 1989, for example, nearly 73 percent of bachelor's degrees in these arts scholarship subjects were awarded to women. By 2015, that share fell to 58 percent.

Moreover, in 1995, just 8.2 percent of bachelor's degrees in non-performing arts subjects were awarded to African Americans, Hispanics, or American Indians/Native Alaskans. In 2015, that rate climbed to 17.1 percent.

Figure 2c. Percent of bachelor's degrees in "study of the arts" awarded to African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians/Native Alaskans: 1995-2015



Source: Based on analysis by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Humanities Indicators, HumanitiesIndicators.org.

⁸ For information on how the American Academy of Arts and Sciences classifies fields by degree, see the Academy's crosswalk, "CIP Degree Codes and Their HI Discipline and Field Assignments."

Military Service and Disabilities

During the 2012–2016 period, 4.8 percent of artists reported serving in the military.⁹ That share was lower than the 7.8 percent of all workers who have served.

Military service, however, is more common among workers in several other cultural occupations than it is for artists. For example, 12.3 percent of broadcast and sound engineering technicians have served in the military, as have 10.8 percent of ushers/ticket-takers.

Additionally, the percentage of artists with disabilities is similar to that of all U.S. workers. In 2012–2016, roughly 6 percent of all workers, and 5.1 percent of artists, reported having one or more of the disabilities captured by the American Community Survey.¹⁰

“Other entertainers” (an eclectic group of artists that includes jugglers, clowns, and magicians, to name just a few), are the exception—8.8 percent reported having a disability.

Among other cultural workers, the share with a disability is comparatively high (roughly 13 percent) for ushers/ticket-takers and for models/demonstrators.

Homeownership and Migration

The share of artists who own their own home is 63 percent, a rate similar to the 65.1 percent of all workers who do so.¹¹

For the following artist occupations, homeownership rates generally fall into the average range for artists as a whole: fine artists, art directors, and animators (62.4 percent); designers (64.7 percent); musicians (61.5 percent); writers and authors (64.4 percent); and photographers (63.4 percent).

A number of other types of cultural workers also report average homeownership rates, including archivists, curators, and museum technicians (63 percent); editors (61.5 percent); and printing press operators (64.7 percent).

In contrast, homeownership is well above average for architects and librarians (76 percent of workers in both occupations). It is below average for: dancers/choreographers (30.9 percent), entertainers (49.5 percent), television/video/motion picture camera operators and editors (55.6 percent); motion picture projectionists (56 percent); and models/demonstrators (55.5 percent).

Additionally, almost 17 percent of artists moved in the last year. That rate was a little higher than the 15 percent of all workers who moved.¹²

Dancers/choreographers and entertainers are the exception—during the period considered, 38 percent and 23 percent, respectively, moved. Younger people are more likely to move, and dancers/choreographers and entertainers are younger, on average, than are other artists.

Approximately 20 percent of cultural workers in the following categories moved in the last year: broadcast and sound engineering technicians; television/video/motion picture camera operators and editors; models/demonstrators; travel/tour guides; and photographic process workers.

9 Military service includes respondents who are now on active duty or who were in the past, or who are on active duty for training in the Reserves or the National Guard.

10 The American Community Survey collects data on the following disabilities: Hearing—is deaf or has serious difficulty hearing; Vision—is blind or has serious difficulty seeing; Cognitive—because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, has serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions; Ambulatory—has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; Self-care—has difficulty dressing or bathing; and independent living—because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, has difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor’s office.

11 Homeownership is defined as a house, apartment, or mobile home being owned, free and clear (i.e., no encumbrances to the property such as a lien or mortgage), or through a mortgage.

12 The difference in share that moved between all workers and artists is statistically significant at 90 percent confidence.

Health Insurance Coverage

Compared with all workers, artists are somewhat more likely to be covered by a health insurance plan.¹³ In 2012–2016, nearly 88 percent of artists reported coverage. For all workers in the labor force, that share was 85 percent.¹⁴

The share covered meets or exceeds 90 percent for architects, producers and directors, and writers and authors. However, just 60–75 percent of dancers/choreographers, entertainers, and announcers have health plans.

Additionally, at least 90 percent of cultural workers in the following occupations are covered by a health plan: archivists, curators, and museum technicians; librarians and library technicians; and editors.

Commuting, Arrival Times, and Working at Home

Like all workers in the labor force, most artists spend an average of 20 minutes commuting to work. Exceptions are reported for actors—who commute 30 minutes—and for producers/directors—who typically spend 25 minutes commuting.

Likely contributing to these longer commute times is that actors and producers/directors are heavily concentrated in New York State, which, the Census Bureau reports, is home to the largest percentage of workers with “long commutes” of 60 minutes or more.¹⁵

A similar argument can be made for television/video/motion picture camera operators and editors—they too are concentrated in New York, and their commute time is longer than average—25 minutes in 2012–2016.¹⁶

Most workers (including artists, as a group) start work between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.¹⁷ Performing artists tend to start later. For example, 48 percent of dancers/choreographers arrive at work between noon and midnight, as do 33 percent of musicians and 25 percent of actors.

While few writers and visual artists begin working as late as noon, they are more likely to work at home.¹⁸

In 2012–2016, 4 percent of the labor force worked at home, but among writers and authors, that share was 35 percent. The share working at home is also comparatively high for both fine artists and photographers—27 percent and 21 percent, respectively.

Among other cultural workers, editors are the most likely to have this work arrangement—during the five-year period, nearly 20 percent worked at home.

¹³ The American Community Survey (ACS) identifies the following health insurance plans: insurance through a current or former employer or union; insurance purchased directly from an insurance company; Medicare; Medicaid; TRICARE or other military insurance plan; VA health care; Indian Health Service; or another type of health insurance plan specified by the ACS respondent.

¹⁴ The difference (87.5 percent vs. 85.1 percent) is statistically significant at 90 percent confidence.

¹⁵ In 2011, 16.2 percent of workers living in New York commuted 60 minutes or longer. Among all U.S. workers, 8.1 percent had long commutes. The Occupational Employment Survey, OES (produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) reports that 6,610 actors (earning wages and salaries) worked in New York State in 2017. As a share of the state's labor force, that was nearly 2.4 times greater than the national average. The corresponding 2017 “location quotient” for producers/directors in New York was 3.1.

¹⁶ The OES reports a New York location quotient of 1.25 for television, video, and motion picture camera operators. For film editors, the LQ is 2.31.

¹⁷ The median arrival time for artists is between 8:30 and 8:34 a.m.

¹⁸ Work at home is captured by the ACS's question pertaining to a worker's method of transportation, including car, subway, or bicycle. The final option in this question is “work at home.” Respondents who reported working at home are not asked about arrival time or about the number of minutes occupied by commuting.

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Chapter III. Self-Employment

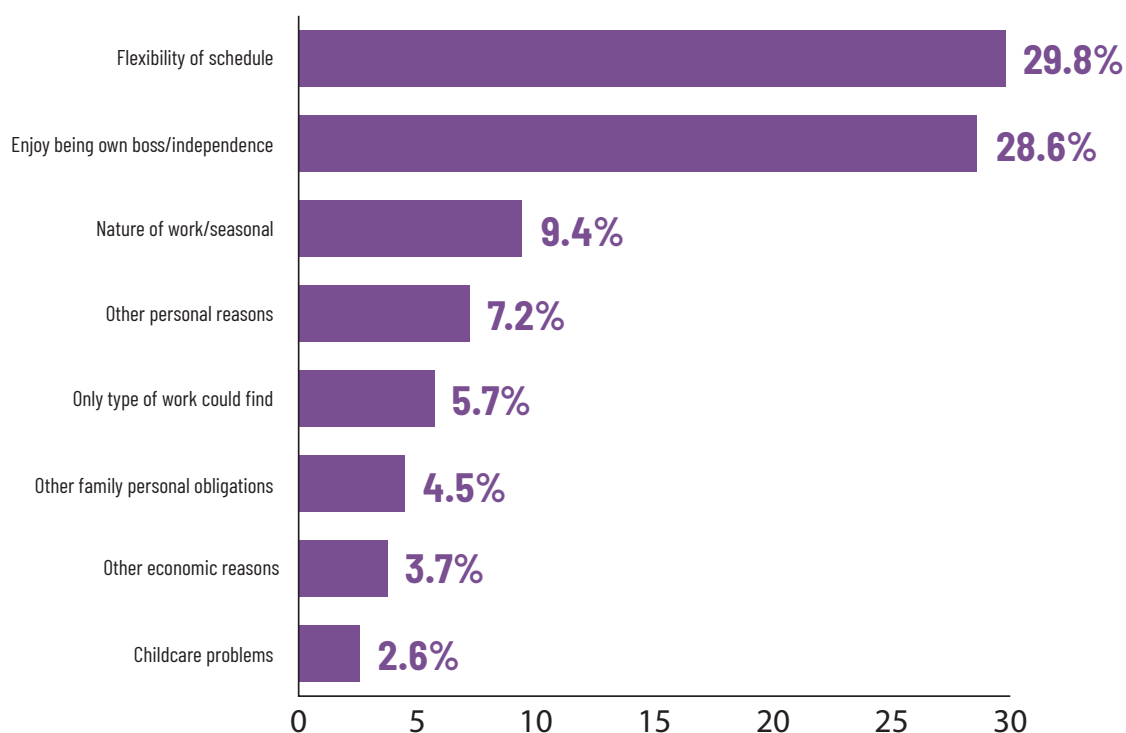
Historically, Arts Endowment research has shown proportionately high levels of self-employment among artists. This pattern persisted in 2012-2016, when 9.4 percent of the U.S. workforce was self-employed. By contrast, the share for artists as a group was 34.1 percent.

For each individual artist occupation, the self-employment rate meets or exceeds 20 percent. It is especially high among photographers and fine artists—more than half of workers (55.9 percent and 53.8 percent, respectively) in each of these occupations is self-employed.

The self-employment rate is also high for writers and authors—42.1 percent in 2012-2016.

Being one's own boss is generally less common for other types of cultural workers. However, an exception is reported by television/video/motion picture camera operators and editors. In 2012-2016, 34 percent were self-employed.

Figure 3a. Main reason artists give for being self-employed: 2017



Note: Other reasons given for being self-employed each account for fewer than 2 percent of respondents. These reasons include "health limitations" and "to obtain experience/training."

Source: Contingent Worker Survey (CWS), 2017, U.S. Census Bureau

Reasons for Self-Employment

Although self-employment is typically associated with an entrepreneurial lifestyle, it is worth investigating the degree to which artists view their self-employment status as inherently desirable.

The 2017 Contingent Worker Survey (CWS) permits researchers to understand various motives for self-employment, or participation in the so-called “gig economy.” For example, the survey asks U.S. self-employed workers about a range of possible reasons for their occupational status. Notably, only 5.7 percent of self-employed artists reported as the “main” reason for choosing this arrangement that it was the only kind of work they could find, while 3.7 percent cited “other economic reasons.”

On the other hand, nearly equal percentages of self-employed workers gave as the main reason for this arrangement the “flexibility of schedule” that self-employment affords (29.8 percent), and the fact that they enjoyed the independence and being their “own boss” (28.6 percent). Only 9.4 percent reported that the nature of the work had driven them to find self-employment, while 7.2 percent reported “other personal reasons.”

Regardless of their reasons for being self-employed, a large majority of self-employed artists (79 percent) answered “no” when asked if they would prefer working for someone else.

The main reasons given for self-employment varied across artist occupation types. For example, flexibility and independence were the main reasons for self-employment cited by the artists who are the most likely to be self-employed: namely, photographers, fine artists, writers and authors, musicians, and “other entertainers.”

Meanwhile, comparatively higher shares of self-employed fine artists, entertainers, and musicians also reported that the nature of their work is the main reason they are self-employed.

For example, 45 percent of self-employed fine artists cite flexibility and independence as the main reasons for being their own boss. The next largest percentage, 22 percent, attest they are self-employed because it is the nature of their work.

This inherent aspect of their work was also cited as the main reason by 21 percent of self-employed entertainers, and by 14 percent of self-employed musicians.

Possible Drawbacks to Self-Employment

Although many artists enjoy being self-employed, they may pay a price for the flexibility and independence that self-employment affords.

Compared with artists on payrolls, self-employed artists earn somewhat less and their earnings are more variable; they also forego employer-provided benefits.

In 2012-2016, annual earnings by self-employed artists, working full-year/full-time, averaged \$65,347—roughly \$4,000 less than the average earned by wage and salary artists.

Moreover, self-employed artists have earnings that are more variable (less predictable) than do artists on payrolls. In that same period, the standard deviation of earnings was approximately \$81,700 for self-employed artists and \$56,000 for artists on payrolls.

Additionally, roughly 83 percent of self-employed artists were covered by health insurance. The share covered for artists on payrolls was closer to 90 percent.

A CLOSER LOOK: RESEARCH ON SELF-EMPLOYED ARTISTS

In their 2017 paper, “Who Goes Freelance? The Determinants of Self-Employment for Artists,” Joanna Woronkiewicz and Doug Noonan used data from the Current Population Survey, conducted between 2003 and 2015, to examine the self-employment behavior of artists.¹⁹

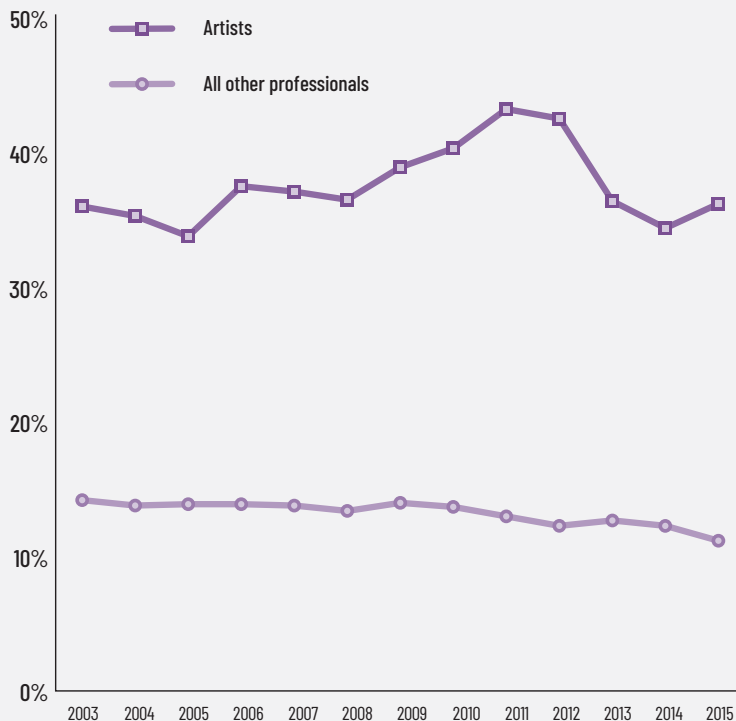
During this timeframe, the artist self-employment rate increased, particularly during the Great Recession and its aftermath years of 2008-2011. But for all other professional workers, the self-employment rate trended downwards.

The researchers also found that artists are more likely to transition into self-employment if they live in cities where artists compose a high share of the workforce.

For example, a one standard-deviation increase in the “city” variable was associated with a 0.04 percentage point increase in the probability of switching to arts-related self-employment.

Similarly, a one standard-deviation increase in the share of artists in the local workforce was associated with a 0.02 percentage point increase in the probability of switching to arts-related self-employment.²⁰

Figure 3b. Self-employment rates for artists and all other professional workers: 2003-2015



Source: Reprinted from Joanna Woronkiewicz and Douglas S. Noonan. “Who Goes Freelance? The Determinants of Self-Employment for Artists.” *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, (September 2017), 7.

¹⁹ This research was supported in part by a grant from the [National Endowment for the Arts](#).

²⁰ Woronkiewicz and Noonan, 13..

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Chapter IV. Income and Earnings

Full-Time Employment and Earnings

Compared with all workers, artists are less likely to work full-year/full-time, defined as working 50-52 weeks for at least 35 hours per week, during the past year.

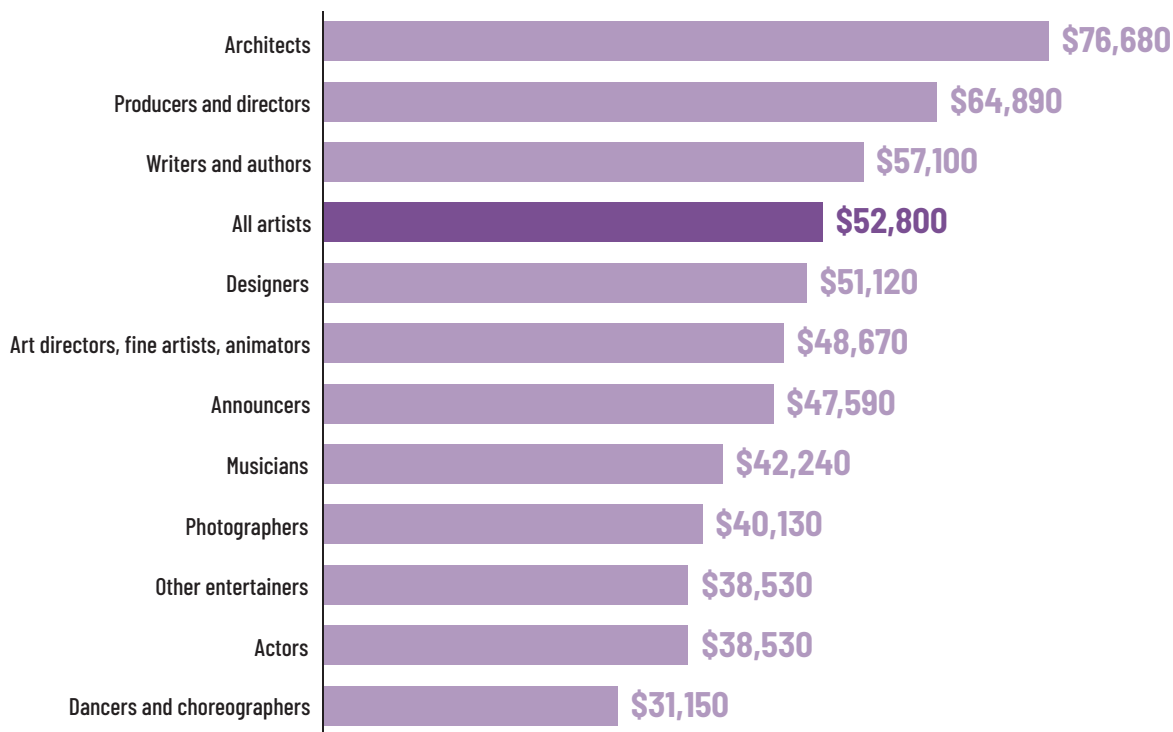
In 2012-2016, 59.3 percent of artists worked full-year/full-time. Among all workers, that share was 67.2 percent.

Actors are the least likely of artists to work full-year/full-time—just 22.8 percent reported doing so during the period under consideration. In contrast, most architects (78.9 percent) work full-year and full-time.

Among other cultural workers, a similarly large share (79.2 percent) of printing press operators work year-round and full-time, while only 14.3 percent of ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket-takers are full-year/full-time workers.

The estimated median earnings of artists (working full-year/full-time) exceeds the average calculated for all workers—\$52,800 versus \$44,640, respectively. Artists, however, earn less than other professional workers, who, as a group, earned median wages and salaries of \$60,460 in 2012-2016.

Figure 4a. Median annual wages and salaries by artist occupation: 2012-2016



Note: Estimates are measured in 2016 dollars for full-year/full-time workers.
Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, U.S. Census Bureau

Wage Ranges

In 2017, the highest-paid U.S. worker earned in excess of \$46.23 an hour, while the lowest paid earned less than \$9.60. The resulting wage range is \$36.63. In other words, the best-paid worker earned 4.8 times more than did the lowest-paid (\$46.23 versus \$9.60).

This section uses data from the Occupation Employment Survey (OES) to investigate wage ranges among artists and other cultural workers. Unlike the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey, which are household surveys, the OES (produced jointly by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and State Workforce Agencies) surveys 200,000 nonfarm business establishments semiannually.

Although the OES excludes self-employed workers, it provides employment and wage estimates for 800 detailed occupations.²¹

Earnings ranges are observed through the OES's estimation of hourly wage percentiles: 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th.

To illustrate, among wage-and-salary craft artists (e.g., ceramic artists, glass blowers, and goldsmiths), 10 percent earn less than \$9.76 per hour (the 10th percentile), while 10 percent earn more than \$34.45 (the 90th percentile). The resulting wage ratio for craft artists is 3.5, well below the ratio calculated for all workers (4.8).

Among workers in artist occupations, actors exhibit the greatest wage ranges. In 2017, the lowest-paid actors earned less than \$8.97 per hour. But the best-paid made more than \$89.08. Actors in the superstar earnings group made nearly ten times more than did their lowest-paid associates.

The hourly wage ratio is also large for musicians and for "other designers" such as creative designers working in digital and interactive design. In 2017, the best-paid musicians earned seven times more than did low-wage-earning musicians; for other designers, the ratio was 5.5.

On the other hand, hourly wages vary less among architects. Architects in the 90th wage percentile earned 2.8 times more than those in the 10th percentile, and the ratio was similar (2.7) for landscape architects.

Hourly wages generally do not range greatly for other cultural workers. Among workers in 27 detailed cultural occupations, above-average wage ratios are observed in just two groups: theatrical or performance makeup artists and film or video editors. The best-paid makeup artists earn six times more than do the lowest-paid artists, and the wage ratio is 5.4 for film editors.

Income-to-Poverty Ratios

The income-to-poverty ratio shows how close an individual's income is to his or her poverty threshold.²² As explained by the Census Bureau, the ratio is reported as a percentage that compares an individual's income with applicable thresholds.²³

Using data from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, the estimated median income-to-poverty ratio for all workers in the labor force was 3.7. Put another way, the incomes of U.S. labor force workers were on average 3.7 times greater than their poverty thresholds.

As a group, artists fare better. During the period considered, artists' incomes were typically 4.4 times greater than their assigned poverty thresholds of income.

The artists with the largest poverty barriers are architects, producers/directors, and writers/authors. Workers in each of these occupations had an income-to-poverty ratio of 5.0.²⁴

Although their incomes are above poverty levels, dancers/choreographers are the artists closest to poverty—their ratio was 2.2. In fact, 46 percent of dancers/choreographers have incomes at less than twice their poverty thresholds.

One-third of actors also have an income-to-poverty ratio of less than 2.

The income-to-poverty ratio meets or exceeds 4 for: archivists, curators, and museum technicians; librarians; editors; and broadcast and sound engineering technicians.

Cultural workers closer to poverty include models/demonstrators and motion picture projectionists. Roughly 40 percent of workers in both occupations earn incomes at less than twice their poverty thresholds.

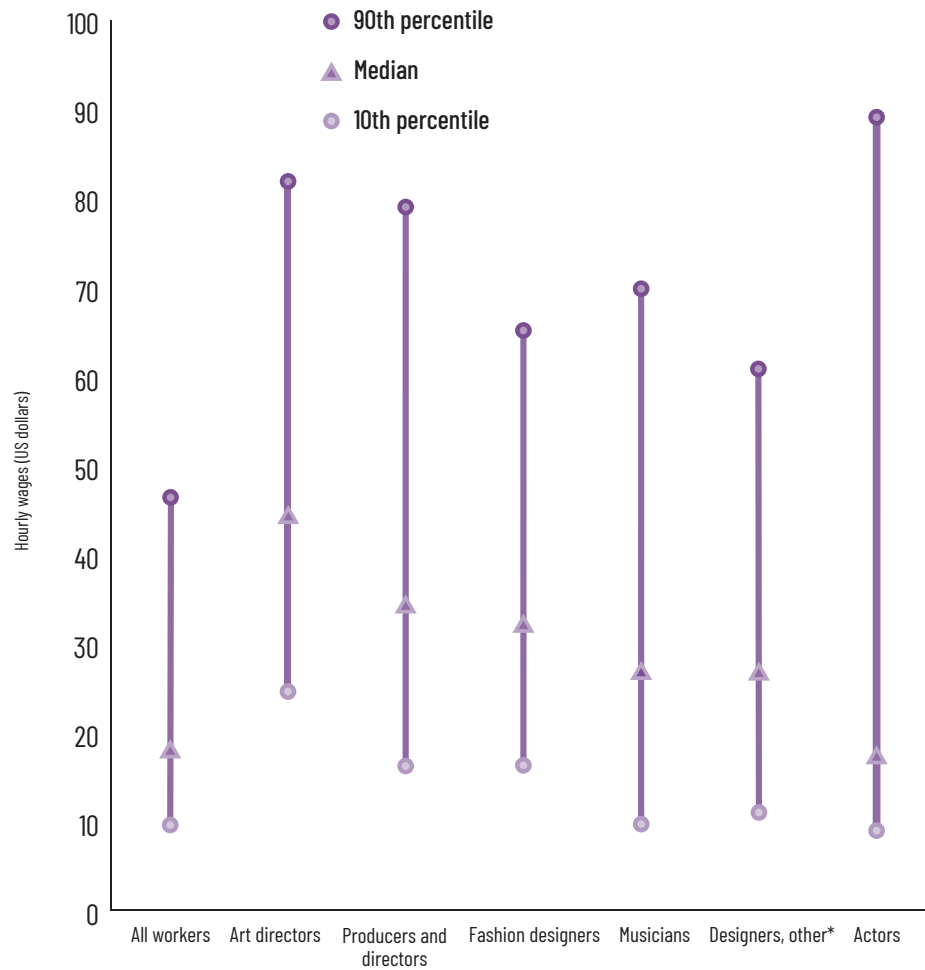
²¹ See Occupational Employment Survey.

²² Official income poverty thresholds are set by the Office of Management and Budget's Statistical Policy Directive 14.

²³ The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes. It excludes capital gains or noncash benefits. In 2016, the annual poverty threshold for a one-person family, under age 65, with no children, was \$12,486; for a single householder, under age 65, with one child under age 18, the annual threshold was \$16,543. For more information, see *How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty*. Money income is defined as income received on a regular basis (exclusive of certain money receipts such as capital gains) before payments for personal income taxes, social security, union dues, etc. Money income does not reflect the fact that some families receive part of their income in the form of noncash benefits, such as food stamps and subsidized housing.

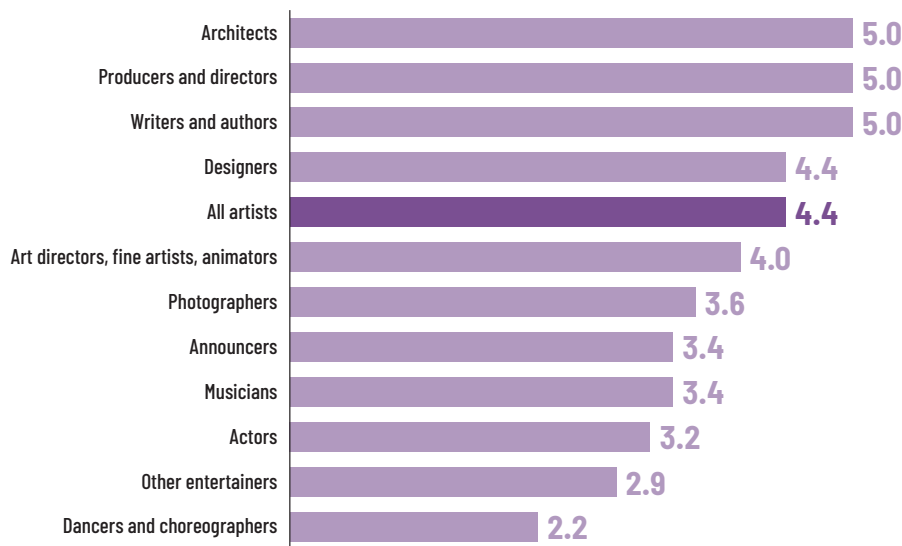
²⁴ Income-to-poverty ratios are top-coded at 5.01 in the ACS PUMS dataset.

Figure 4b. Artists whose hourly wages range highly: 2017



* Includes "creative designers" who work in digital and interactive design.
 Source: Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 4c. Median income-to-poverty ratios by artist occupation: 2012–2016



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS: 2012–2016, U.S. Census Bureau

Women's-to-Men's Earnings Ratio

In 2012–2016, women in the U.S. labor force (working full-year/full-time) earned \$0.79 for every dollar men earned.²⁵ Among artists, the ratio was slightly lower—\$0.77.

Women who work as visual artists and photographers tend to earn less than their male peers, while women producers/directors and women musicians are close to earnings parity.²⁶

ACS data indicate that women fine artists, art directors, and animators, and women photographers, earn \$0.74 for every dollar men visual artists and photographers earn.

Women producers/directors and women musicians, alternatively, earn \$0.95 and \$0.92, respectively, for every dollar earned by men in those occupations.

Among other cultural workers, female editors fare better than women workers as a whole, in terms of approaching parity with men workers. Female editors earn \$0.89 for every dollar earned by their male counterparts. The women's-to-men's earnings ratio is \$1.01 for tour and travel guides.

As evident among all workers, the women's-to-men's earnings ratio of artists declines with age. Young women come close to earning what young men do. As women age, they earn progressively less than their male counterparts.

For example, women artists aged 18–24 earn \$0.97 for every dollar earned by men artists in that age group. But for women who are 35–44, the ratio drops to \$0.84. By the time they reach ages 55 to 64, women artists earn just \$0.66 for every dollar male artists make.

²⁵ The female-to-male earnings ratio is calculated as the median earnings of full-year/full-time women workers divided by the median earnings of full-year/full-time men workers.

²⁶ Due to concentration of one gender in an occupation and/or small sample sizes, caution should be used in interpreting the women's-to-men's earnings ratio for: architects; dancers/choreographers; and announcers.

As summarized by the U.S. Department of Labor, a number of factors contribute to gender wage gaps.²⁷ For example, an unequal gender division of unpaid family and childcare work may deter women from working longer hours, which can lead to higher pay.

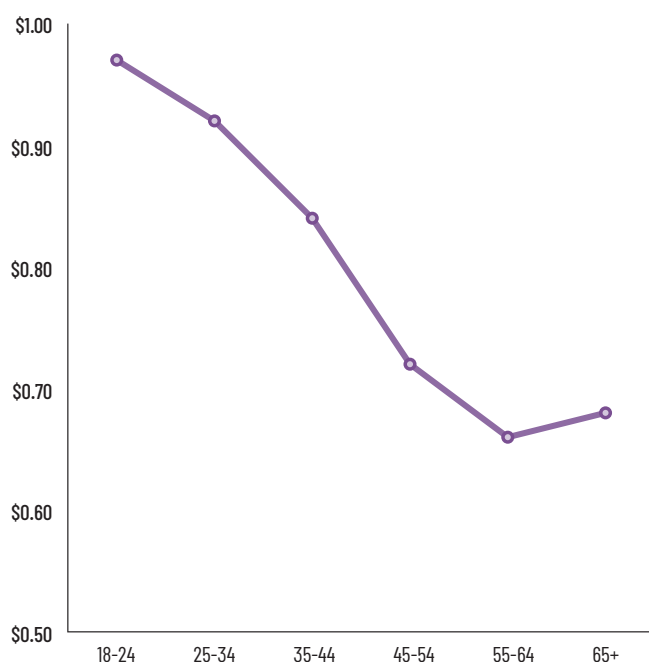
Among artists, for example, women are less likely to “overwork” (work more than 50 hours per week) than men are. In 2012–2016, nearly 11 percent of male artists worked more than 50 hours a week; for female artists, the share overworking was 6.1 percent.

Additionally, research published by the National Bureau of Economic Research suggests that gender differences in occupation continue to be an important explanation for the gender wage gap.²⁸ Lower median pay is evident in occupations in which women make up a significant share of the workers employed.

Occupational segregation may be contributing to the gender wage gap among artists as well. Consider that women compose 80 percent of workers in the dancer/choreographer occupation, the artist occupation reporting the lowest earnings (median annual earnings of \$31,150 among full-year/full-time workers in 2012–2016).

Architects, alternatively, report the highest artist earnings (\$76,680); women compose just 25 percent of architects.

Figure 4d. Women’s-to-men’s earnings ratio by age group: 2012–2016
Artists working full-year/full-time



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS, U.S. Census Bureau

27 Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor.

28 Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, “The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 55, no. 3 (2017): 789–865.

A CLOSER LOOK: MIRA MUSICIAN SURVEY

In April–June 2018, the Music Industry Research Association (MIRA) conducted a survey of 1,200 individuals who earn a living as a musician or composer, or who are endeavoring to do so.

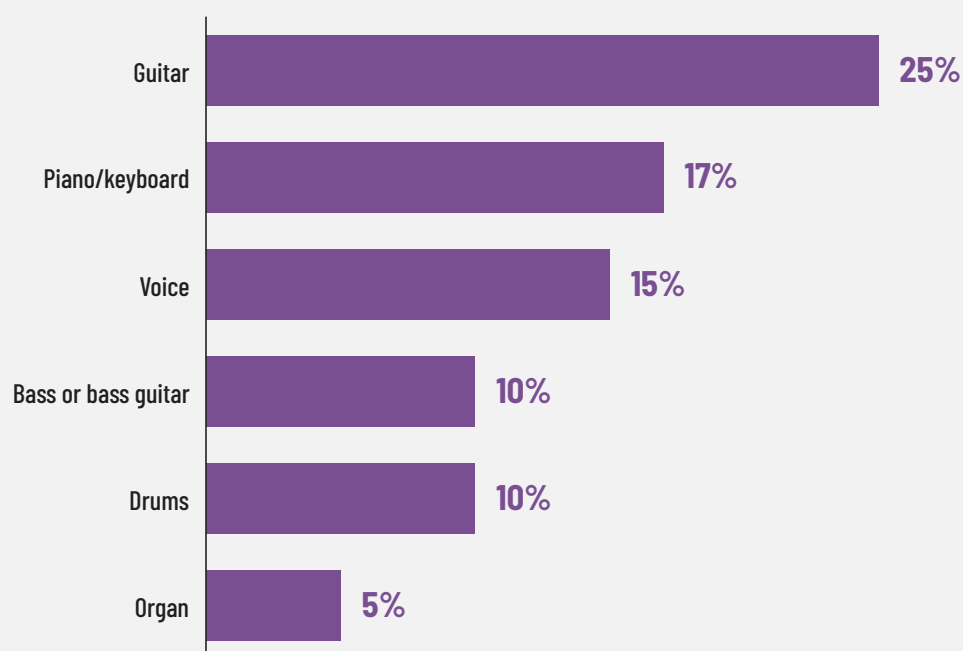
Unlike the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), which is a series of monthly samples designed to represent the U.S. population, this inaugural MIRA Survey drew from three major sources: marketing services from the American List Council; musician referrals; and MusiCares' clients.²⁹ Although using different methodologies, both the ACS and the MIRA Survey depict musicians in largely the same way in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, and marital status. The MIRA Survey results, however, do portray older musicians as earning higher incomes relative to those reported in the ACS for this group of artists.

Nonetheless, the MIRA Survey provides a wealth of detailed information about musicians that is unavailable from the ACS or from other government household surveys. For example, the MIRA Survey reports that approximately 35 percent of musicians performed classical, jazz, or pop music during the previous year. Roughly 30 percent performed folk, blues, country, or Christian music.³⁰

MIRA Survey respondents were also asked about the primary musical instrument they play—25 percent said the guitar; 17 percent said the piano/keyboard.

When asked what they liked most about being a musician, 81 percent said "artistic expression" and 70 percent said "performing." "Financial insecurity" was cited by 70 percent of musicians in response to what they liked least about their profession; 40 percent disliked the time and effort required to market themselves.

Figure 4e. Top primary instruments played by musicians: 2018



Note: Fewer than 5 percent reported their prime instrument as the: violin; tuba; trumpet; saxophone; trombone; or clarinet.
Source: Music Industry Research Association

²⁹ Established in 1989 by the Recording Academy, MusiCares offers services and programs to members of the music community. Services include financial assistance and treatment for medical illnesses.

³⁰ Respondents were asked to indicate all the music genres they had performed in the last year.

Chapter V. Career Outlook

Based on the National Employment Matrix: 2016–2026, which is produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), this section features employment projections and occupational separations and openings for workers in artist and cultural occupations.³¹

The BLS projects “faster than average” employment growth for set and exhibit designers, actors, and producers and directors. Between 2016 and 2026, employment in these occupations is expected to increase by approximately 10–12 percent.

Average annual job openings in these occupations are projected to be 1,600 (set designers); 7,400 (actors); and 14,100 (producers/directors).

The BLS notes that projected job growth for actors and producers/directors stems from strong demand for new movies and television shows. Although the BLS does not address the specific source of job growth for set and exhibit designers, the projected increase likely stems from public demand for movies and TV. After all, workers in this occupation create movie, television, and theater sets.

Alternatively, over the period spanning 2016 to 2026, employment is projected to decline for three artist occupations: –6.4 percent for floral designers; –5.6 percent for photographers; and –11.6 percent for radio and television announcers.³²

The BLS expects 11,100 “separations” among photographers, annually, from 2016 to 2026. Of these, 6,100 photographers are expected to leave the labor market, while 5,000 are projected to leave photography for other occupations.

The BLS projects declines in floral designers because employment in the florist industry (the main employer of floral designers) is expected to decline.

The BLS projections define employment as salaried workers. The number of salaried photographers is expected to fall as more employers contract freelancers rather than hire their own photographers.³³ Greater access to technology that can enable this transition—in other words, the widespread availability of camera phones—is likely to play a part.

For many artist occupations, the BLS projects “average” employment gains. These include landscape architects (6.4 percent); fine artists such as painters, sculptors, and illustrators (6.6 percent); multimedia artists and animators (8.4 percent); musicians (6 percent); and writers and authors (4.5 percent).

Of all cultural occupations tracked by the National Endowment for the Arts, the fastest employment growth is projected for film and video editors. Between 2016 and 2026, the BLS projects employment in this occupation to grow by 17 percent.

Moreover, the Bureau expects an average of 4,000 film editor job openings, per year, during the ten-year span.

Growth in the number of shows produced by Internet-only services such as streaming is expected to lead to more work for film and video editors.

Other cultural occupations for which employment is projected to increase faster than average include post-secondary art, drama, and music teachers (12 percent); archivists (14.3 percent); curators (14 percent); audio and video equipment technicians (12.9 percent); and theatrical makeup artists (12.5 percent).

Rising enrollment at post-secondary institutions is driving projected employment growth for college art teachers. Most of this growth will be in part-time positions, the BLS notes.

Public interest in science, art, and history, along with the need to store information in archives, is contributing to above-average projected employment growth for archivists and curators.

A sharp employment decline is expected for photographic process workers. Between 2016 and 2026, the BLS projects employment in this occupation to fall by 18.1 percent. This drop translates into a projected average of 3,800 separations a year—1,300 processing workers leaving the labor market altogether, and 2,500 leaving photographic processing jobs for other types of work.³⁴

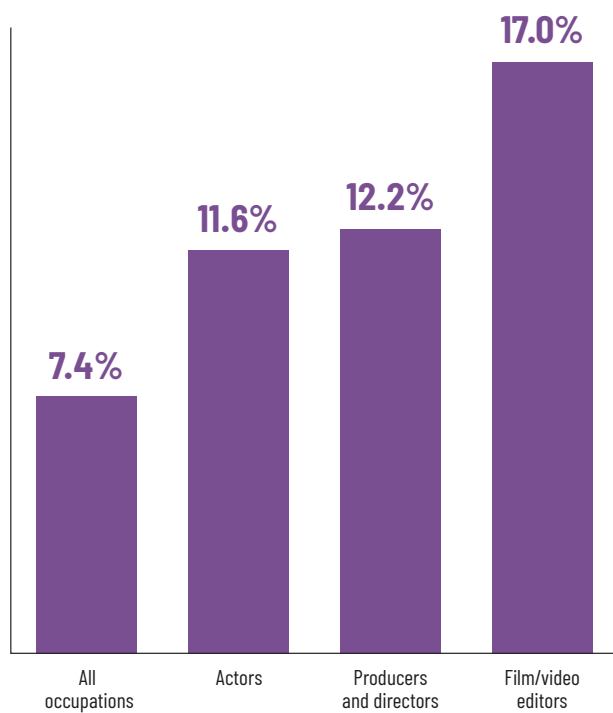
³¹ BLS employment projections assume full employment.

³² The BLS does not cite specific reasons for declining employment among announcers. The agency does note, however, that formally trained announcers and those with experience are expected to fare best in this occupation.

³³ As discussed in Chapter II, the self-employment rate for photographers is among the highest of all artist occupations. In 2012–2016, 55.9 percent were self-employed.

³⁴ The Economic Census (conducted on a five-year basis by the U.S. Census Bureau) shows a corresponding decline in the photo-processing industry. The 2002 Economic Census reported a count of 2,085 photo-finishing laboratories (except one-hour), and 2,706 establishments classified as one-hour photo-finishing labs. By 2012, the number of these labs dropped to just 609 and 234, respectively.

Figure 5a. Projected percent change in employment: 2016–2026
Selected fast-growing arts and cultural occupations



Source: Employment Projections, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

A CLOSER LOOK: GROWTH IN NEW DIGITAL MEDIA

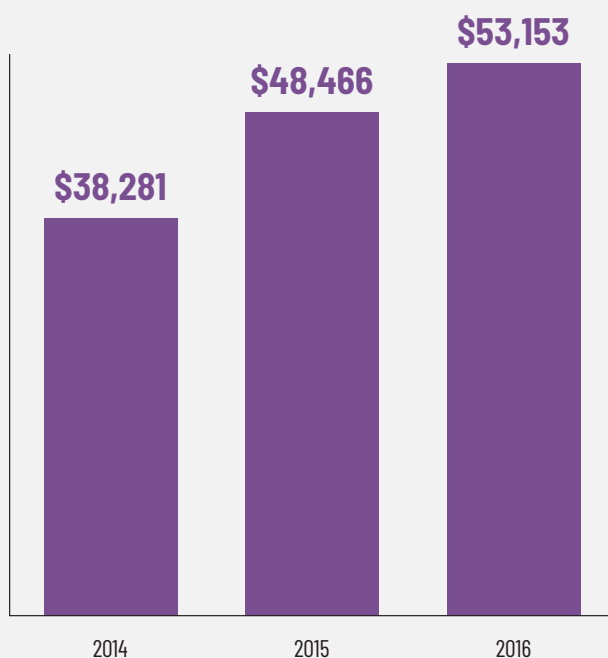
Growth in streaming media (which is driving projected employment growth for actors and other arts and cultural workers) is supported by economic research and by the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA).

In his seminal 2017 paper, “How Digitization Has Created a Golden Age of Music, Movies, Books, and Television,” economist Joel Waldfogel concludes that digitization has lowered the cost of bringing new media products to market, thereby increasing the number and quality of these products. For example, Waldfogel notes that the share of TV shows that originated outside of major broadcast networks grew from under 10 percent in 1970 to 75 percent in 2010.

Moreover, the ACPSA shows that “other information services,” an industry composed mainly of Internet publishing and broadcasting/streaming, is among the fastest growing arts and cultural industries.

Arts and cultural value added by “other information services” grew by an average annual rate of 17.8 percent between 2014 and 2016.

Figure 5b. Real value added from arts and culture by “other information services”: 2014–2016
(in millions)



Source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account: (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts

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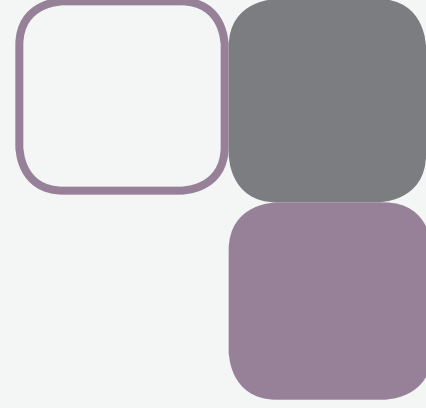
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