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Pandemic Priorities

Written by Daniel Fonner and Rebecca Roscoe

SMU
DataArts

Exploring unemployment and demographic characteristics of arts and culture workforces and artists across the U.S.

Image courtesy of The Boston Conservatory, Boston, MA. Photo by Eric Antoniou.

Introduction

For over 10 years, SMU DataArts has studied the demographic makeup of arts and culture workforces and boards to help organizations better understand themselves and the communities in which they serve. From [Los Angeles](#) to [Houston](#), from to museum professionals, we have surveyed demographic characteristics related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, workplace perceptions, and more. While the results of these localized studies are very beneficial to participating organizations and their local communities, it is difficult to use this data to generalize about the state of the entire arts and culture sector in the United States.

In 2021, we extended our demographics work beyond just our own studies and evaluated national data about the sector in an effort to gain deeper understanding about the makeup of the aggregate arts and culture workforce. Using data from the United States Census Bureau, in partnership with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), via their survey known as the [Current Population Survey \(CPS\)](#), we are now able to assess the demographic characteristics of not only those employed in the sector but also those who are unemployed on a near real-time basis.

The importance of this data cannot be overstated in its ability to shed light on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the sector, both in terms of job losses through layoffs and furloughs as well as helping us gauge who was perhaps let go during this time and who remained at these organizations. As [vaccination rates](#) continue to rise and arts and cultural organizations develop new strategies and business models for operation, mindfulness of the diversity of their workforces should be a primary area of attention.

Throughout the pandemic, SMU DataArts has studied the arts and culture sector focusing on [modeling early impacts](#), assessing [impacts recognized in New York City](#), studying the distributions of federal funds for the [Paycheck Protection Program \(PPP\)](#), exploring the scope of the federal [Shuttered Venue Operators Grant \(SVOG\) program](#), and [developing a predictive model](#) to determine potential future ticket sales based on performance offerings and COVID-19 conditions. Studying employment data from the Current Population Survey allows us to focus even more on the workplace impacts of COVID-19, especially in relation to diversity and equity concerns within the sector.

This report explores the demographic characteristics of arts and culture workforces, both employed and unemployed, and its appendix provides contextual information about the Current Population Survey's applications and limitations as related to the arts and culture sector. Additionally, this analysis will look specifically at artists employed beyond just the arts and culture sector to better understand the larger ecosystem. We start in January 2020 to establish a baseline of pre-pandemic employment characteristics and track the monthly progression through January 2022.

Key Takeaways

- **Unemployment in the arts was double that of overall national unemployment, and BIPOC and disabled individuals were disproportionately affected.** In the early months of the pandemic, unemployment in the arts and culture sector spiked to nearly 30% while the national rate hit about 15%. Within the sector, Black, Indigenous, Asian, multiracial and disabled individuals saw higher rates of unemployment than the sector overall. In December 2021, unemployment rates fell to pre-pandemic levels around 4%.
- **Gender representation in the arts was higher for women, but men saw faster job recovery after the pandemic's onset.** Throughout the pandemic generally, respondents identifying as female represented a higher percentage of those employed in the arts and culture workforce as compared to those identifying as male. Higher levels of male job loss in early 2020 were counteracted by stronger male job gains over female gains throughout most of 2020 and 2021.
- **Artists across all sectors recognized slightly higher unemployment than the nationwide average but represented a smaller portion of BIPOC individuals compared to the country overall.** Defining artists using the National Endowment for the Arts' definition of artistic occupations, we found that unemployment for artists was almost 2% higher on average than the national unemployment rate throughout the pandemic. The overall demographic profile of artists in January 2022 was split evenly between male and female artists, but represented proportionally fewer individuals identifying as Black, Indigenous, Asian, and multiracial than the national population overall.

As new data becomes available from the CPS each month, we will continue to monitor demographic trends in employment as well as study whether COVID relief funds from government agencies had any impact on sustaining employment rates in the arts and culture sector.

While this data is imperfect, it is a critical tool in identifying gaps in representativeness within the arts and culture sector and can empower organizations to innovate and better serve their communities.

Show's canceled! How did pandemic closures affect sector unemployment rates?

In late 2021, SMU DataArts began analyzing CPS data to track [demographic characteristics of those unemployed in the arts and culture](#) sector (see the Appendix for details on methods and

data limitations).¹ One of our primary areas of interest was the potential disparities in those who were laid off or furloughed early on in the pandemic compared to those who maintained employment. In June 2020, Crain's New York Business referenced the results of our [workforce demographics research](#) in NYC to draw connections between the demographic makeup of various staff roles within arts and culture workforces relative to the types of roles that faced higher levels of unemployment, stating:

Museums looking to show solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement now must reckon with cuts they made in the heat of the pandemic, which quietly made their already disproportionately white workforces even whiter...

...[M]useums clearly have a diversity problem. Some of the most sought-after jobs in the museum world overwhelmingly go to white hires—three-quarters of curators, for example, are white, according to the report. Meanwhile 80% of security staff at city museums are people of color, and around half are gift shop clerks, visitor-services staff and educators...

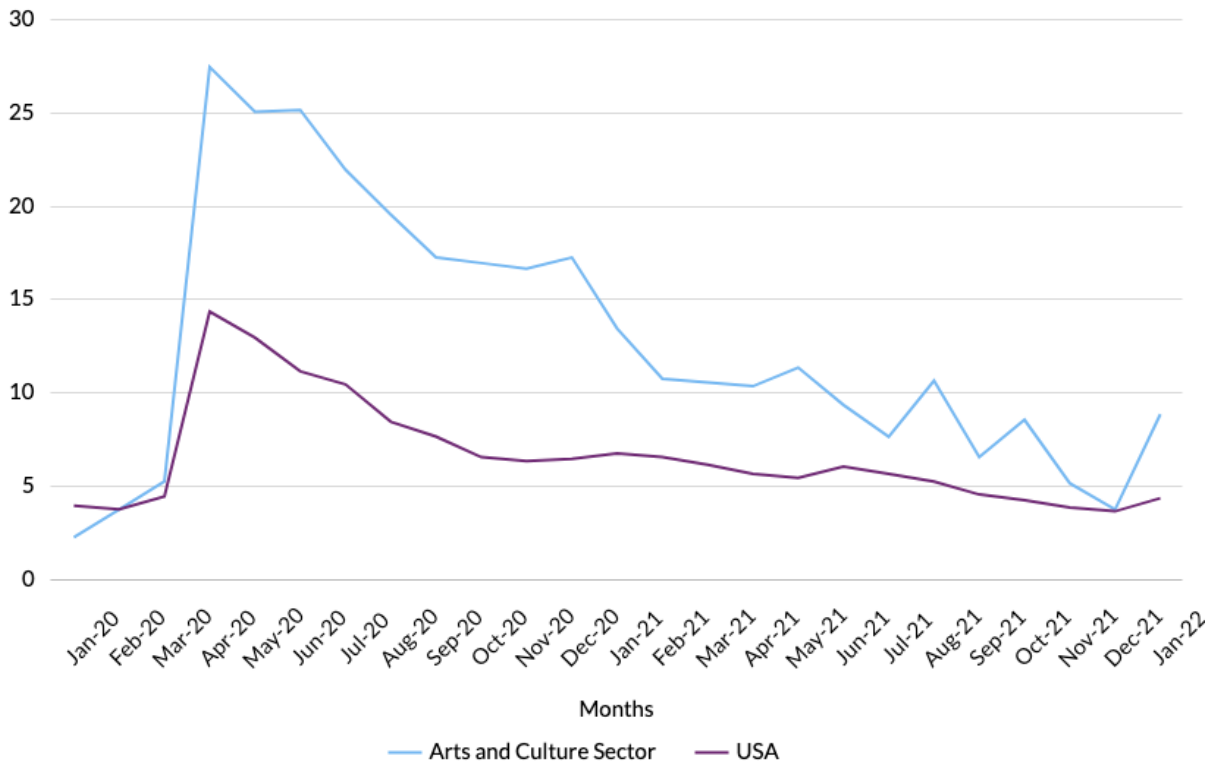
And those jobs were the first to go during the pandemic.²

To explore this topic further, we analyzed unemployment rates in the arts and culture sector relative to the overall national unemployment rate to identify trends in how the sector fared from January 2020 through January 2022, shown in Figure 1, below.

1. Early explorations of this data included assistance from Cullen Keeter (SMU-MAMBA '22).

2. <https://www.crainsnewyork.com/arts/reckoning-over-race-museums-confront-their-pandemic-layoffs>

FIGURE 1: US vs Arts & Culture Sector Unemployment Rates, 2020-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#)

In the first two months of 2020, the overall national and the arts and culture sector unemployment rates were similar at about 4%. **Then, turbulence at the onset of the pandemic led to skyrocketing unemployment in April 2020, with national unemployment at almost 15% and arts and culture sector unemployment over 28%.** Subsequent months trended downward across the country and the sector, but the rate within the sector remained consistently two to three times higher than the national rate through May 2021. In August 2020, unemployment dipped below 10% overall nationally and has remained so ever since. By contrast, arts and culture sector unemployment remained above 10% until June 2021, 10 months later.

Unemployment rates within the sector jumped back above 10% in August 2021 followed by a seesawing decline into December 2021. This turbulence aligns with the onset of the Delta variant of COVID-19; however, the month over month spikes are more likely noise within the data rather than strong reactions to change each month. December 2021 was the first month where the unemployment rate in the sector matched that of the national unemployment rate, both returning to pre-pandemic levels.

The most recent data from January 2022 shows a sharp increase in unemployment within the sector and is a trend that will need continued monitoring over the coming months. As noted in the Appendix, CPS data was re-weighted for January 2022, so direct comparisons of December 2021 to January 2022 might not be the most appropriate. This period also covers the rise of the

Omicron variant of COVID-19, which may accurately indicate a rise in unemployment, but we need additional data to draw those types of conclusions.

Beyond the sector rates overall, we parsed the CPS data to look at racial, disability, and gender characteristics of workers within the arts and culture sector. Due to the reduced size of the CPS sample data when parsing by multiple variables, we cannot report on specific unemployment rates by these characteristics with strong confidence. However, we can provide general statements about the arts and culture sector when looking at these variables:

- For virtually every month since January 2020, white respondents recognized unemployment rates roughly 1% below the sector unemployment rate. Black, Indigenous, Asian, and multiracial respondents collectively averaged unemployment rates about 6% higher than the sector overall, with greater spikes in the first four months of the pandemic.
- Those identifying their ethnicity as Hispanic recognized higher levels of unemployment than non-Hispanic survey respondents.
- Respondents identifying with a disability averaged unemployment rates three to four percentage points higher than those identifying without a disability over the trend period. That figure increases to about 12 points if looking only at the first six months of 2020.
- Differences associated with gender inverted over time. Female respondents had higher levels of unemployment before the pandemic, whereas male respondents had higher levels of unemployment as COVID-19 spread. Between March and May 2021, as vaccines became more widely available, the trends inverted again— male unemployment fell below female unemployment in the sector. Note that throughout the pandemic, more [women left the labor force than men](#), which might contribute to the inversion of unemployment rates when utilizing the BLS' labor force definition as described above. In the last quarter of 2021, unemployment by gender in the sector fluctuated, with differences in rates minimizing.

Shifts in unemployment rates within the sector and economy-wide were definitely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while this research cannot claim causal connections between employment and government relief programs, it is important to note that all sectors may have recognized impact from relief programs specifically designed to help businesses and organizations maintain their workforces. The Paycheck Protection (PPP) program provided over \$3.9B to support over 74,000 for- and nonprofit arts and culture organizations and businesses during the program's operation from April 2020 through May 2021.³ Additionally, the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) program (previously known as Save Our Stages), provided

3. For details on SMU DataArts' calculations related to the PPP program, please see:

<https://culturaldata.org/learn/data-at-work/2020/ppp-data-on-preserving-jobs-in-the-arts-culture-sector/>. Note that the \$3.9B value was calculated in February 2022 using the most recent [PPP data](#) released by the SBA looking at for- and non-profit organizations and businesses. Looking at both non-profit organizations in the sector alone, PPP support totaled \$1.9B supporting roughly 10,000 arts and culture organizations.

roughly \$4.7B dollars to over 5,000 organizations and businesses categorized as live performing arts organizations, museum operators, and theatrical producers.⁴ These funds do not include other relief efforts supported by foundations or other government agencies. Future research by SMU DataArts will explore how these various funding streams may have directly impacted levels of employment in the sector throughout the pandemic.

Who's left? What was the demographic profile of those employed in the sector throughout the pandemic?

We now turn to the demographic characteristics of those who are employed within the arts and culture sector. The sample size of those employed is much larger than those who are unemployed, so we are able to dive a little deeper to better understand the sector's demographic makeup. This information will allow us to assess whether organizations perhaps "made their already disproportionately white workforces even whiter" as claimed by *Crain's New York Business*, as well as allow us to see how gender may have affected female participation in the workforce relative to levels of unemployment.

Before exploring this topic, it is important to recognize some limitations within the CPS data related to race and gender. In conducting [our own demographics studies](#), SMU DataArts offers many options that allow respondents to more fully see themselves in the response choices. However, this report is limited to response choices available in the CPS. For gender classification, the CPS only provides respondents with two choices for gender: female or male. For race, the CPS includes Black, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, and combinations of these races as options. Due to limited sample sizes from the CPS, however, our analyses combine Black, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial respondents into a single category to lessen noise in the data.

Abigail Echo-Hawk, Chief Research Officer for the Seattle Indian Health Board, has written about efforts to 'decolonize data' especially in situations where communities, such as the urban Indian community, are not represented in larger data gathering efforts by government agencies. Such efforts reduce these communities to "being shown as statistically insignificant" resulting in potentially harmful health outcomes as well as other social inequities.⁵ Unfortunately, when parsing the CPS data at the level of granularity required for these analyses, this reality bore out. We also recognize that creating a single label or acronym for this combined racial group is imperfect and does not distinguish important differences between the

4. Data from the SVOG program can be found here: <https://data.sba.gov/dataset/svog>. Note that this includes both for- and non-profit organizations.

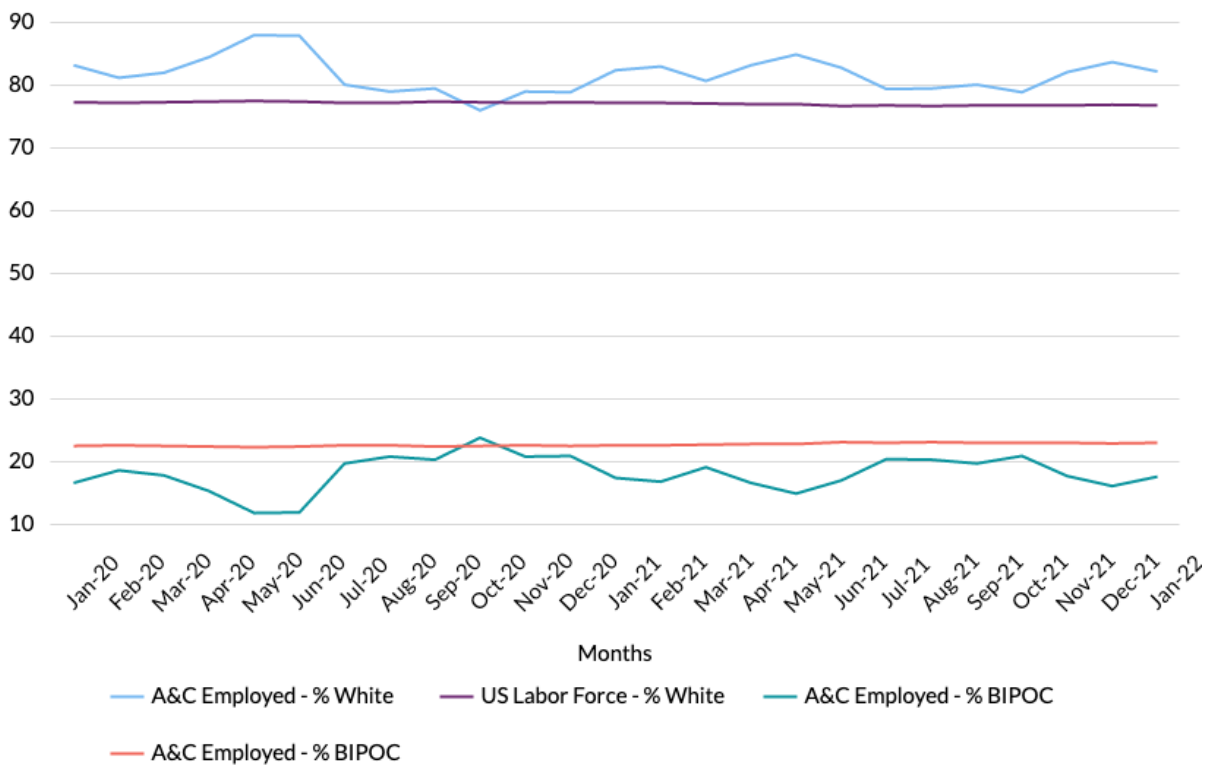
5. <https://crosscut.com/2019/05/abigail-echo-hawk-art-and-science-decolonizing-data>.

groups. This report will use the acronym BIPOC to identify this group, recognizing its imperfections.

Race and Ethnicity

Of those who are available to work in the U.S. (labor force), how representative are those who work in the arts and culture sector? Figure 2 shows mirror images of the racial makeup of those employed in the arts and culture sector compared against the racial makeup of the larger U.S. labor force.

FIGURE 2: Arts & Culture Employed vs National Labor Force, Race

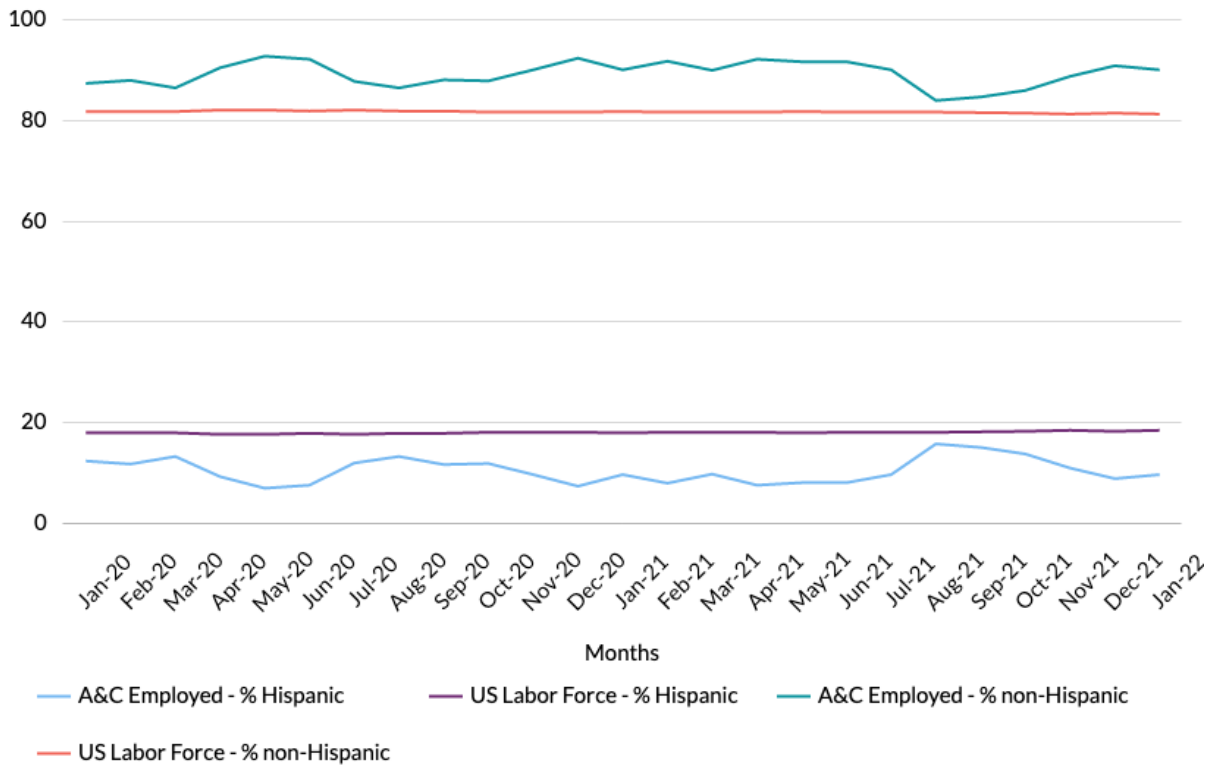


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#)

The U.S. labor force consists of just over 75% White and just under 25% BIPOC individuals. **Prior to, and throughout the pandemic, arts and culture workforces were in fact “whiter” than the labor force in general**, with the greatest spike at the beginning of the pandemic when White employees accounted for up to 88% of the workforce. Even as overall employment in the sector has returned to pre-pandemic levels (as discussed in the previous section), BIPOC employees are still represented in the arts and culture sector below their representation in the labor force overall.

A complementary component of race in the CPS relates to ethnicity, which is defined solely by a respondent’s identification of Hispanic ethnicity. Figure 3 shows that those identifying as Hispanic are even more heavily underrepresented in the arts and culture sector, averaging around 11% of the workforce compared to about 18% of the labor force throughout the pandemic.

FIGURE 3: Arts & Culture Employed vs National Labor Force, Hispanic Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#)

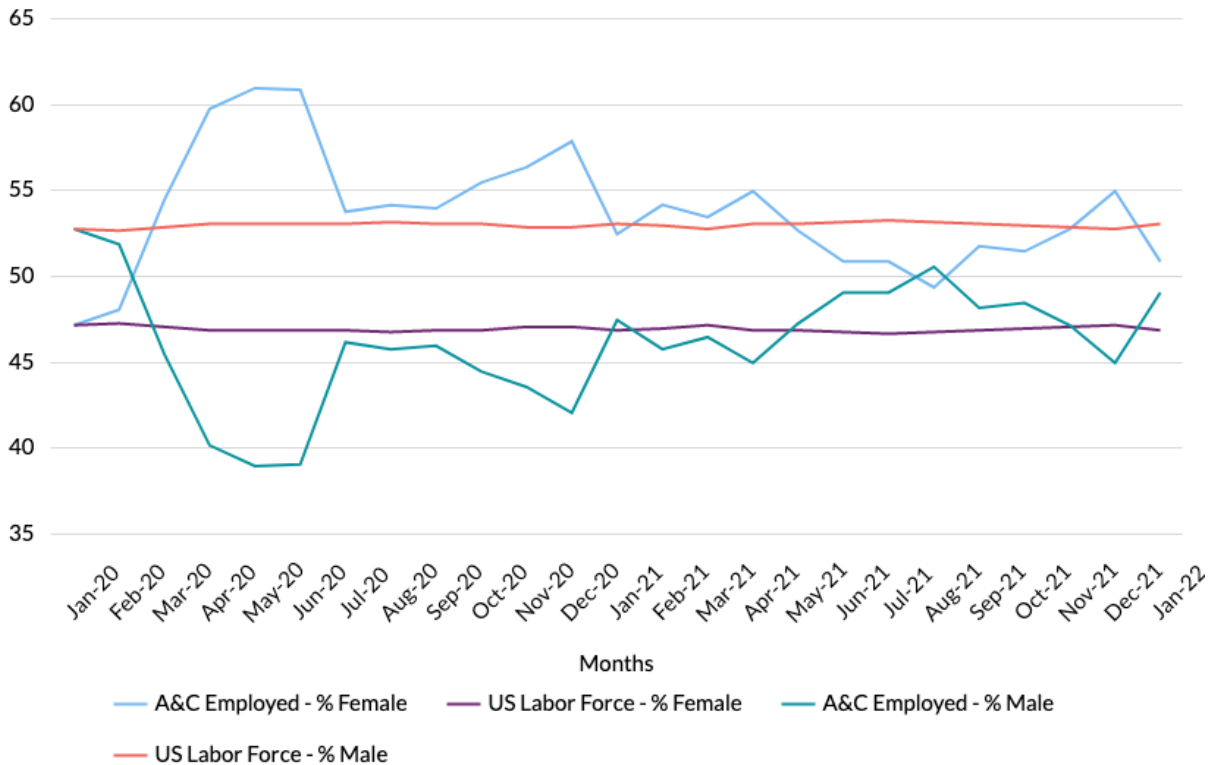
Disability Status

From January 2020 through January 2022, CPS respondents employed in the sector who identified a disability averaged almost 5% of sector employment while representing about 4% of the labor force. However, the month-over-month data is very noisy due to small sample sizes, which prevents us from generating a meaningful trend chart. This data should also be framed within the limitations of the BLS’ definition of the labor force discussed in the methods appendix to this report.

Gender

The final component we will analyze regarding the arts and culture industry relates to employment by gender identity. Across the U.S., those identifying as female represent roughly 47% of the labor force and those identifying as male represent about 53%, shown by the purple and red lines in Figure 4, respectively.

FIGURE 4: Arts & Culture Employed vs National Labor Force, Gender*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#)

*Note: The y-axis scale for Figure 4 runs from 35% to 65% rather than 0% to 100%. The reduced scale range allows for easier viewing of changes over time for this particular data point.

The trend period shows that respondents identifying as female represent a higher percentage of those employed in the arts and culture workforce (blue line) as compared to those identifying as male (green line). Stark shifts in employment levels in January each year should be viewed with the caveat of CPS data is re-weighted each January to better align the data with current population statistics.

Early pandemic months showing higher representation by female individuals should also be placed in the context of increased level of unemployment in the sector. From early March 2020 to April 2020, female employment fell by over 176,000 jobs (23%) and male employment fell by

about 244,000 jobs (38%). However, the tightening of representation in summer 2020 was driven by strong gains in male employment, with modest to negative gains for females.

Another area of interest emerges in the summer of 2021 where representation hovers around 50% for both genders. **This was again driven by stronger month-over-month growth in the number of jobs gained by those identifying as male compared to more modest growth for those identifying as female.**

Employment breakdowns by gender, race, ethnicity, and disability status within the arts and culture sector are complex and affected by many social, political, and personal pressures. This analysis provides a key piece in the discussion of demographic characteristics of the work force, but it does not answer all questions on this topic.

The Creative Workplace: Artists working across sector boundaries

Beyond those employed or seeking employment across various occupations in the arts and culture sector, it is important to study the characteristics of artists in the United States who perhaps work beyond just the arts and culture sector. Designers, actors, sculptors, musicians, directors, and artists of many other types contribute to creative workforces and outputs. The following analysis will explore unemployment characteristics of those identifying their occupations as artists as well as dive deeper into the demographic characteristics of artists in January 2022 (see the Appendix for more information on methods).

Unemployment Rates

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly disrupted employment in the arts and culture sector as evinced in the previous section. **Artists working across industries recognized increased unemployment above the national average beginning in early 2020, but the unemployment rate was only about 2% higher than the national average throughout the pandemic, as shown in Figure 5.**

FIGURE 5: US vs Artist Unemployment Rates, 2020-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#)

Artists working across industries and job types prevented the massive unemployment spike seen by the arts and culture industry overall. The small month-over-month spikes in Figure 5 for artist unemployment is more attributable to noise in the data rather than stark monthly shifts. While it appears that unemployment is growing again for artists, CPS re-weighting in January 2022 may be the culprit. Additional months of data will be necessary to understand the current increase in artist unemployment. In terms of the number of artists in the United States (both employed and unemployed), 2.7 million artists were in the labor force in January 2020 compared to 2.6 million in January 2022.

Artist Demographic Characteristics

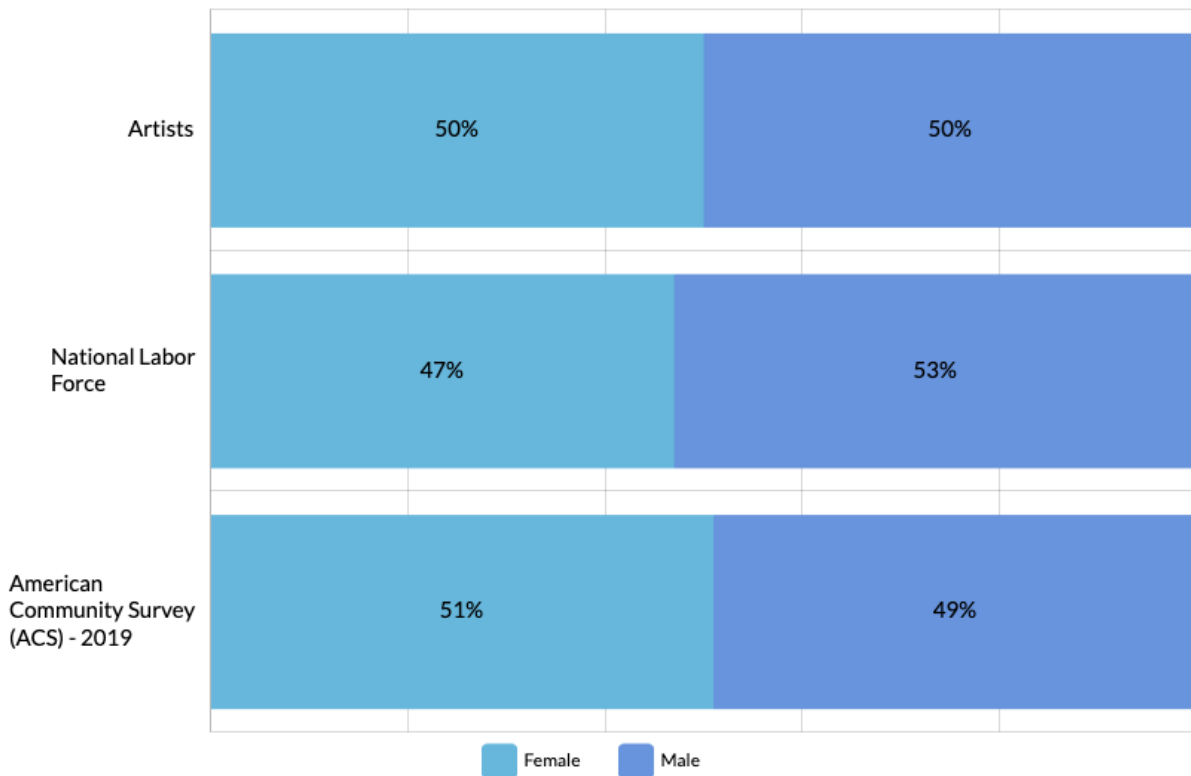
Here we look at artist demographics in the month of January 2022, which is the most recent data available, rather than tracking changes throughout the pandemic. **The overall demographic profile of artists was split evenly by gender, but represented proportionally fewer individuals identifying as Black, Indigenous, Asian, and multiracial than the national population overall.** It is important to keep in mind that the definition of artists only includes those in the labor force with SOC codes as identified by the NEA.

Specifically, we will compare gender, disability, race, and ethnicity across three segments:

1. Artists in the labor force in January 2022,
2. All people in the U.S. labor force in January 2022, and
3. The demographic breakdown of the entire United States using data from the American Community Survey

The first characteristic we probe is gender, simply identified as female or male. Figure 6 shows that for artists, the gender breakdown is 50/50, which aligns very closely to the national labor force and U.S. population overall. This represents about 1.3 million female and 1.3 million male artists in the United States.

FIGURE 6: Artists vs National Labor Force, Gender, January 2022

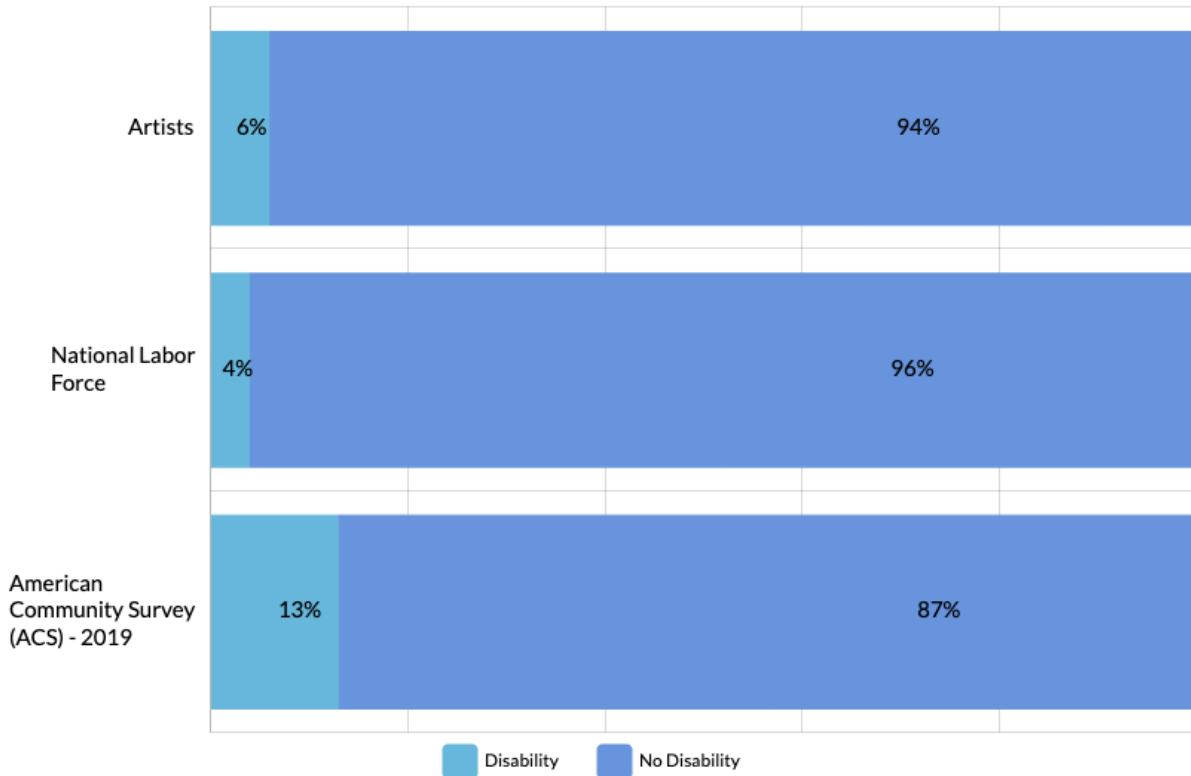


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#), [American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates](#)

Exploring disability characteristics in Figure 7, 6% of artists and 4% of the national labor force identify as a person with a disability, which represents about 150,000 artists. Thirteen percent of the national, non-institutionalized population identifies as a person with a disability, perhaps signifying labor force disparities relative to the general population.⁶

6. The Census defines the “institutionalized population” as “people under formally authorized, supervised care or custody in institutions at the time of enumeration. Generally, restricted to the institution, under the care or supervision of trained staff, and classified as “patients” or “inmates.”” See:

FIGURE 7: Artists vs National Labor Force, Disability, January 2022

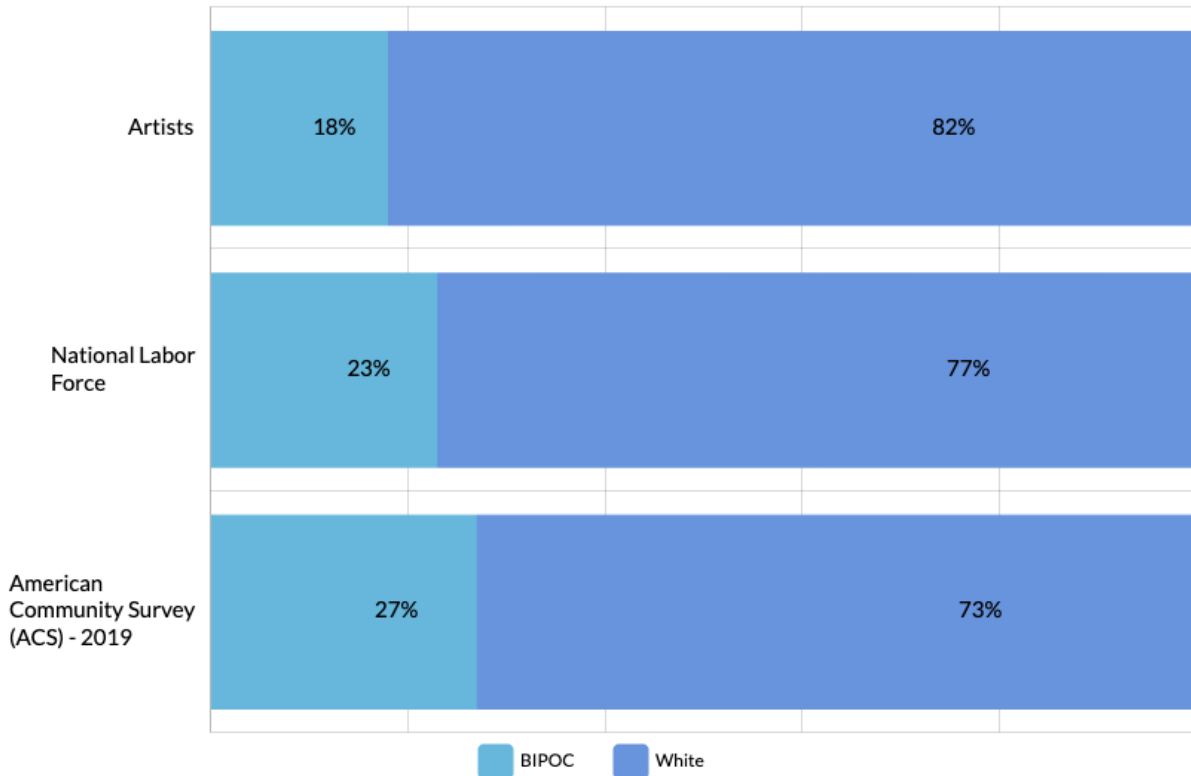


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#), [American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates](#)

Figure 8 shows racial characteristics of artists in two clusters: BIPOC and White. As mentioned in the previous section, the term BIPOC is utilized to cover Black, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial respondents to ensure the sample is large enough to allow generalization and comparison.

https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/glossary.cfm?g_id=207&view=true. The CPS also focuses on the non-institutionalized population of the United States.

FIGURE 8: Artists vs National Labor Force, Race, January 2022



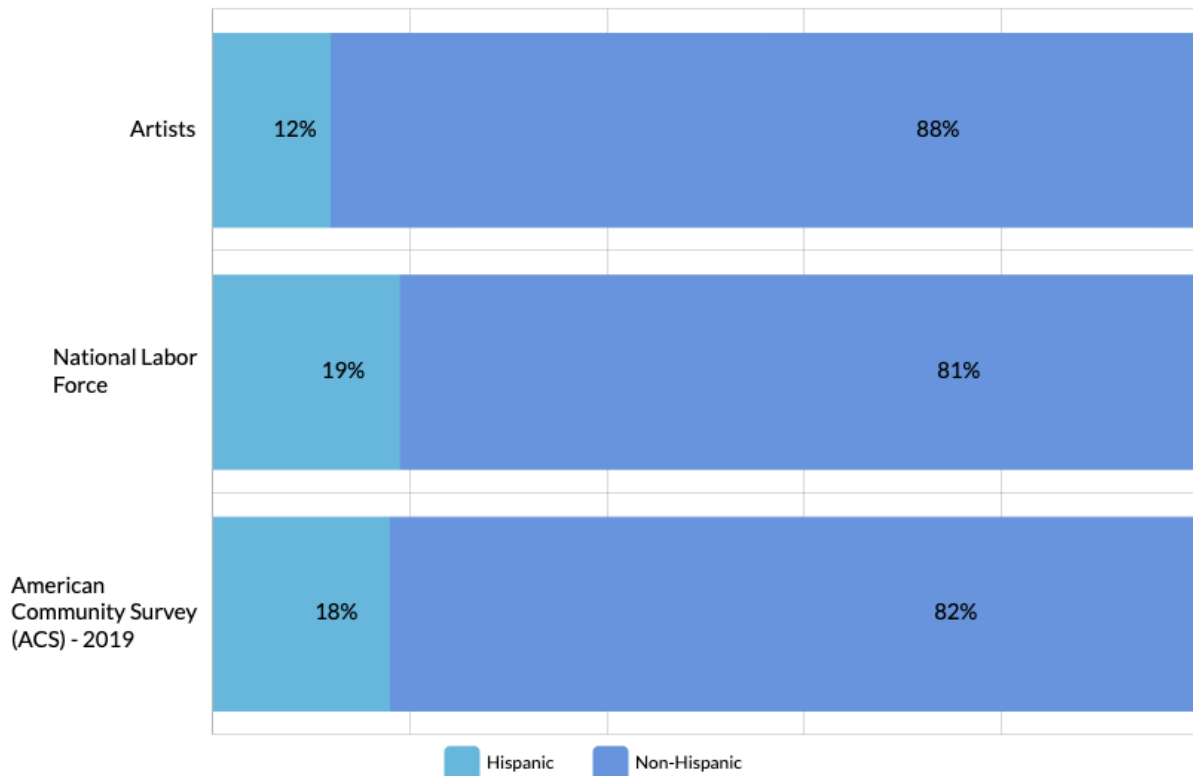
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#), [American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates](#)

Roughly 465,000 artists identified as BIPOC in January 2022, comprising 18% of the artistic occupation group. This value is 5% smaller than the general labor force and 9% smaller than the general U.S. population. The racial disparity is even more pronounced when examining the limited data released from the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, which found that only 62% of the total population identified as “White Alone”, which would mean a BIPOC population of roughly 38%, 20% higher than the artist workforce.⁷ While these numbers show stark differences, it is important to keep in mind that the CPS and ACS are based on samples of the U.S. population rather than a full census. Further data is needed, especially from the ACS, to better assess the comparability of these data sources. If nothing else, however, this data shows BIPOC artists represented a much smaller portion of artistic occupations than are represented throughout various aspects of U.S. society.

Hispanic origin as expressed through an ethnicity question from the Census shows that 12% of the artist occupation identify as Hispanic, as shown in Figure 9, representing about 305,000 artists.

7. To view information from the 2020 Decennial Census, please see: <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>

FIGURE 9: Artists vs National Labor Force, Ethnicity, January 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Basic Monthly Current Population Survey](#), [American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates](#)

This value is 6% to 7% lower than the national labor force and general population of the U.S. The 2020 Decennial Census identified the Hispanic population comprising about 19% of the total population, aligning it with the data from the national labor force and ACS data.⁸

Moving Forward

COVID-19 has disrupted and reshaped our world in many ways; masks, vaccines, video conferencing, digital arts programming, and even delivery services have all developed to meet societal needs. However, the initial shock of the pandemic on employment in the United States laid bare the inequities in how arts and culture organizations cultivate and retain workforces. Many faced job losses driven by sector-wide unemployment that was virtually double the national average, but individuals identifying as Black, Indigenous, Asian, and multiracial experienced higher rates of unemployment than White individuals. These shifts in unemployment also created workplaces where those who remained employed were disproportionately individuals identifying as White – even more so than in the national workforce overall. Similar situations occurred when analyzing ethnicity, gender, and disability.

8. Ibid.

At the end of 2021, unemployment rates in the sector and nationally returned to pre-pandemic levels, but difficulties still remain for arts and culture organizations. Ticket sales data analyzed by SMU DataArts shows that sales remain below pre-pandemic highs due to continued audience hesitancy to attend in-person performances as well as lower traffic rates by those who have returned.⁹ These workforce and audience shifts as a result of COVID-19 place arts and cultural organizations in positions whereby business models and traditional methods of operation may need adjustment to endure in a world where COVID-19 becomes endemic.

Over the past two years, artists embedded throughout various industries fared better overall than the arts and culture sector in terms of unemployment rates, but racial representation of Black, Indigenous, Asian, and multiracial artists in artistic occupations was dramatically lower than their representation in the labor force or U.S. society as a whole.

Data from the Current Population Survey collected by the U.S. Census Bureau is a critical tool in studying the demographic characteristics of artists and the arts and culture sector on a near real-time basis. Shifts in employment and sector responses to current events allow for a better understanding of priorities in the sector and provide evidence to realign those priorities and public policy as inequities are revealed.

This is an ongoing process, and SMU DataArts will continue to study demographics related to arts and culture through the Current Population Survey and other data collection instruments to provide insights needed to build strong, vibrant, and equitable arts and culture communities.

9. See: <https://culturaldata.org/pages/attendance-prediction-june2022/>

Appendix

Methods

Every month, the U.S. Census Bureau surveys roughly 60,000 households as part of the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides employment data that the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) uses to analyze the U.S. workforce. The survey allows for analysis of employment status, industry and occupation classifications, race, gender, and disability status, among many [other characteristics](#). The survey also provides the mechanism by which the National Endowment for the Arts fields the [Survey of Public Participation in the Arts](#) and the [Arts Basic Survey](#).

When assessing the employment characteristics in the U.S., the BLS focuses on the [labor force](#) in its monthly reporting, which includes individuals who are in the civilian, non-institutionalized population, ages 16 and older.¹⁰ Volunteers are not included as part of the labor force definition. Additionally, the labor force only includes those who are employed, absent from a job (vacation, illness, etc.), on layoff awaiting recall, or actively looking (last 4 weeks) and available for work.

The CPS defines industries, both for- and non-profit, through the use of North American industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, and for this analysis, NAICS codes associated with the arts and culture sector include:

- [Performing arts companies \(7111\)](#)
- [Promoters of performing arts, sports, and similar events \(7113\)](#)
- Independent artists, writers, and performers (71151)
- [Museums, historical sites, and similar institutions \(7121\)](#)
- [Libraries and Archives \(51912\)](#)

To define artist occupations beyond just the arts and culture industries, the CPS utilizes Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes. To align with National Endowment for the Arts' list of [Artistic Occupations](#), this analysis uses the following SOC codes to define the universe of artists:

- Actors (27-2011)
- Announcers (27-3010)
- Architects (17-1010)
- Fine artists, art directors, and animators (27-1010)
- Dancers and choreographers (27-2030)

10. Household-level data from the CPS is complemented by establishment/business-level data on the number of jobs available in a given sector on a monthly basis. [Americans for the Arts provides a summary of this data](#). In reporting on the monthly ["employment situation"](#) in the United States, the BLS combines both the establishment-level and household-level data to produce a fuller picture of the labor situation in the U.S. generally.

- Designers (27-1020)
- Other entertainers (27-2099)
- Musicians, singers, and related workers (27-2040)
- Photographers (27-4021)
- Producers and directors (27-2012)
- Writers and authors (27-3043)

While these industry and occupation codes do capture artists and the arts and culture sector, we acknowledge that different approaches for NAICS and SOC code inclusion may exist. We have made our analysis code available on [GitHub](#) should others wish to replicate this analysis or create their own using different parameters.

In the section on artist demographic characteristics, we make a comparison to the general demographics of the entire United States. This analysis utilizes data from the Census' American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 5-year estimates as a complement to the labor force data from the CPS. The Census describes the ACS as follows:

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides data every year -- giving communities the current information they need to plan investments and services. The ACS covers a broad range of topics about social, economic, demographic, and housing characteristics of the U.S. population.

The 5-year estimates from the ACS are "period" estimates that represent data collected over a period of time. The primary advantage of using multiyear estimates is the increased statistical reliability of the data for less populated areas and small population subgroups.¹¹

The 2019 data is the most recent ACS data released by the Census Bureau, with 2020 data expected to be released in early 2022. This analysis will also reference some data from the 2020 Decennial Census, but only data regarding race and ethnicity has been released to date. For consistency across this portion of the report, the charts utilize data from the 2019 ACS.

Limitations of the CPS

While it is possible to explore many facets of the employment sector from demographics to wages, occupations to industries, and nationwide analysis to particular states or Core Based Statistical Areas, the size of the CPS survey sample can limit the statistical power of an analysis when the pool of survey responses becomes too small through parsing by many variables.¹² For example, looking at wages of employed artists within the arts and culture sector in the state of

11. <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html>.

12. Additional information on this topic from the RAND Corporation can be found here:

<https://www.rand.org/blog/2021/03/arts-policy-during-the-pandemic-what-are-we-measuring.html>

Texas who identify as female would result in such a small sample size that the results would not have statistical validity for generalization. The analysis in this report attempts to balance intricate parsing that maintains validity and generalizability of the results.

In addition to sample size considerations, the CPS methods are updated annually to reflect changes in classification and weighting of survey responses. One of the primary reasons for starting this analysis in January of 2020 is that prior to 2020, the NAICS classifications available in the CPS for arts and culture did not include enough granularity to exclude non-arts and culture items. Other sectors such as spectator sports, gambling industries, and golf courses could not be excluded from the general NAICS code associated with Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation.

There are also discontinuities that surface between December and January data as the CPS data is re-weighted each January to reflect changes within the population generally.¹³

Artist information is constrained by two components: [SOC definitions of artists](#) as defined by the NEA and CPS limitations in only including occupation codes for those in the labor force. This analysis could be recreated utilizing different SOC codes to define “artists” should the NEA definition be insufficient for certain circumstances. As this study focuses on artistic occupations as captured by the CPS, hobbyists and other non-occupational artists are not included.

And finally, throughout this report, keep in mind that the industry analysis focuses on those in the labor force as defined by the BLS above. This analysis excludes those “not in the labor force” as those respondents are not associated with specific industries in the CPS data.

13. See Editor’s Note from Axios’ article “Women’s labor force participation still lagging”.
<https://www.axios.com/labor-force-women-jobs-men-ac21e5b8-6a11-4148-86ef-280265b7f42a.html>

About SMU DataArts

SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, is a joint project of the Meadows School of the Arts and Cox School of Business at Southern Methodist University. SMU DataArts compiles and analyzes data on arts organizations and their communities nationwide and develops reports on important issues in arts management and patronage. Its findings are available free of charge to arts leaders, funders, policymakers, researchers, and the general public. The vision of SMU DataArts is to build a national culture of data-driven decision-making for those who want to see the arts and culture sector thrive. Its mission is to empower arts and cultural leaders with high-quality data and evidence-based resources and insights that help them to overcome challenges and increase impact. To work toward these goals, SMU DataArts integrates data from its Cultural Data Profile, its partner TRG Arts, and other national and government sources such as Theatre Communications Group, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Census Bureau, and IRS 990s. Publications include white papers on [emergence from the COVID-19 crisis](#), [culturally specific arts organizations](#), [protecting arts organizations through downturns](#), [gender equity in art museum directorships](#), [working capital and the resiliency of BIPOC organizations](#), and more. SMU DataArts also publishes reports on the health of the U.S. arts and cultural sector with the annual [Arts Vibrancy Index](#), which highlights the 40 most arts-vibrant communities around the country. For more information, visit www.smu.edu/dataarts.

SMU DataArts recognizes that our society is characterized by a complex web of inequities and we are committed to making research, tools, and resources accessible to all persons regardless of race, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, and/or socioeconomic status. We strive to conduct our work without bias or preference and we value input and creativity from diverse perspectives. We use data and evidence to shine a light on inequities within the arts and culture sector. We commit to advancing equity, recognizing that it is a continuous process requiring ongoing input from the field, accountability, and evaluation.

SMU DataArts

PO Box 750356
Dallas, TX 75275-0356

smu.edu/artsresearch



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