

NEA ANNOUNCES NEW RESEARCH NOTE ON ARTISTS IN THE WORKFORCE

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[*Research offers industry-specific, regional, and demographic data on the 2.1 million artists working in the U.S.*](#)

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There are 2.1 million artists in the United States workforce, and a large portion of them – designers – contribute to industries whose products Americans use every day, according to new research from the National Endowment for the Arts. [*Artists and Arts Workers in the United States*](#) offers the first combined analysis of artists and industries, state and metro employment rates, and new demographic information such as age, education levels, income, ethnicity, and other social characteristics.

This latest report builds on earlier NEA research – *Artists in the Workforce: 1990 – 2005* – which identified key traits that differentiated artists from other U.S. workers. That report found artists to be entrepreneurial (more likely to be self-employed) and more educated than the workforce at large. This latest research confirms those earlier conclusions and shares new data about the working artist. Among the key findings:

There are 2.1 million artists in the United States. They make up 1.4 percent of the total workforce, and 6.9 percent of the professional workforce (artists are classified as "professional workers").

- More than one-third of artists in the survey (39 percent, or 829,000 workers) are designers (such as graphic, commercial, and industrial designers, fashion designers, floral designers, interior designers, merchandise displayers, and set and exhibit designers.)
- Performing artists make up the next largest category (17 percent). In addition, each of the following occupations make up 10 percent of all artists: fine artists, art directors, and animators; writers and authors; and architects.
- Between 2000 and 2009, the artist labor force increased by 5 percent while the civilian labor force grew by nearly 8 percent.[i]

Artists work in many industries and job sectors

- More than half of artists (54 percent) work in the private, for-profit sector; 35 percent are self-employed
- One in three artists (34 percent) works in the "professional, scientific, and technical services" sector, which includes architectural and design firms, advertising agencies and consulting firms, and companies offering computer or photographic services.
- One in five (18 percent) of artists work in the "performing arts, spectator sports, and independent artists" category, including more than half (53 percent) of all musicians.
- Fourteen percent of all artists (73 percent of producers and directors, 23 percent of actors, and 20 percent of writers and authors) work in "information" industries, such as the motion picture, video, and broadcasting industries, or newspaper, book, or directory publishing.

Wage gaps persist

- Women artists earn \$0.81 cents for every dollar earned by men artists. This gap is similar to that in the overall labor force (where women earn \$0.80 cents for every dollar earned by men); professional women earn even less – \$0.74 for every dollar earned by professional men.[ii]
- Artists' median wages and salaries (\$43,000 in 2009) are higher than the median for the whole labor force (\$39,000). Yet artists as a whole earn far less than the median wage of the "professional" category of workers (\$54,000), to which they belong. Architects make the highest median wage (\$63,000), while workers who are classified as "other entertainers" had the lowest (\$25,000).[iii]

Artist demographics

- Artists are less socioeconomically and demographically diverse than the total U.S. workforce, yet diversity levels vary across individual artist occupations.
- While artists as a whole are less likely to be foreign-born than other U.S. workers, some of the highest-paid artist occupations have the highest rates of foreign-born workers. Architects and designers are the most likely to be foreign-born (14 to 16 percent, roughly the same as the U.S. workforce).
- Artists work at home at more than three times the rate of the total labor force (15 versus 4 percent).
- Artists are just as likely to be married as the general workforce (53-54 percent).

Artist-heavy states and regions

- New York and California have the highest numbers of artists in the U.S. Oregon and Vermont have 20 percent greater-than-average numbers of artists, with writers and authors especially prominent. Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, Washington, and Rhode Island outdo the national average.
- In Tennessee, 22 percent of all working artists are musicians.
- Minnesota, New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey have the most workers in the book publishing industry.[iv]
- The San Jose, California metro area has the highest level of employment in industrial design services—more than 3 times the U.S. average. [v]

The NEA analyzed data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey, a new annual survey tool that complements the decennial census. The note analyzed 11 distinct artist occupations: actors, announcers, architects, dancers and choreographers, designers, fine artists, art directors and animators, musicians, other entertainers, photographers, producers and directors, and writers and authors. The NEA used a five-year data set (2005-2009) to get a large enough sample size for a thorough analysis. New data on employment patterns and freelance artists reveal more accurate totals for this mobile, entrepreneurial group of workers.

The NEA is the only federal agency to conduct long-term and detailed analyses of arts participation. For more than 30 years, the NEA Office of Research & Analysis has produced periodic research reports, brochures, and notes on significant topics affecting artists and arts organizations, often in partnership with other federal agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Recently, the NEA announced a new research grant opportunity to foster more research on the value and impact of the arts on the nation. The NEA is committed to extending the conversation about arts participation by making data available to both the research community and the public at large.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at www.arts.gov.

Contact:
Sally Gifford
202-682-5606
giffords@arts.gov

[i] Bureau of Labor Statistics

[ii] These calculations are for full-year/full-time work only.

[iii] Annual wages and salaries are provided only for full-time, full-year artists, based on 2009 estimates.

[iv] From the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, which tracks employment by industry, not occupation. This data includes both artists and other workers in that industry.

[v] Ibid.

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