



**NATIONAL
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FOR THE ARTS**

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ARTIST EMPLOYMENT IN 2003

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The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that, in 2003, job market conditions weakened for the total civilian work force and for most workers in artist occupations. In 2003, 8 million civilian workers were unemployed, representing 5.6 percent of the labor force. The 2003 unemployment rate for artists reached 6.1 percent (128,000 workers), up from 5.5 percent in 2002.

This note, #87, reports on employment conditions of artists. Table 1 tracks 2000-2003 trends in primary artist employment, while Table 2 shows secondary artist employment in 2003. Table 3 reports on average earnings and projected employment growth for artists, as well as the level of training typically required in selected artist occupations.

Employment Conditions for the Labor Force, Professional Workers, and Artists

The BLS reports that lingering effects from both the 2001 recession and the late 1990s technology bubble contributed to increased unemployment in 2003.¹ For the year, 8.1 million civilian workers were unemployed, and the unemployment rate grew to 5.6 percent—up from 3.7 percent in 2000 and 5.4 percent in 2002.

Among professional workers (a broad occupation category comprising jobs requiring higher levels of education, including the artist occupations covered in this note), employment increased by 1.2 million workers between 2000 and 2003. But

¹ For more information, see Kranz, Rachel, Marisa Di Natale, and Thomas J. Krolik. “The U.S. Labor Market in 2003: Signs of Improvement by Year’s End,” *Monthly Labor Review*, March 2004.

unemployment also increased, driving the unemployment rate for professional workers from 1.9 percent in 2000 to 3.2 percent in 2003.

Job market conditions also weakened for most artist occupations.² In 2002, unemployment for “all artist occupations,” a sum of the artist jobs reported in Table 1, increased to 128,000, or 6.1 percent of the artist labor force. This represents an increase of 54,000 unemployed artists compared to the number unemployed in 2000.

Chart 1 shows unemployment rates for all civilian workers, workers in professional occupations, and artists in 2000 through 2003. Unemployment rates for all three categories increased, but rates for artists were almost twice as high as unemployment rates for all professional workers. In 2003, for example, the unemployment rate for artists was 2.9 percentage points higher than the rate for professional workers as a whole.

Unemployment Rates, 2000-2003
All Civilian Workers, Professionals, and Artists



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

² This note uses 2000 Census occupations, incorporated by the BLS in 2003. For more information about revised occupation categories, see NEA Research Division Note #84.

Individual Artist Occupations

Between 2000 and 2003, unemployment rates increased for most of the artist occupations shown in Table 1. Among performing artists, for example, unemployment rates were highest for actors—35.2 percent in 2003, an estimated gain of 15.3 points over the rate recorded in 2000.³ Producers and directors also experienced relatively high unemployment in 2003; the 9.1 unemployment rate for this occupation represents a 4.3-point increase over the rate shown for 2000. The unemployment rate for musicians and singers was the same in 2000 and 2003 (5.1 percent), but above the 4.3 percent reported in 2002.

Over the 4-year period, unemployment among architects increased by 3,000 and the unemployment rate rose from 0.4 percent to 2 percent. Conditions improved, however, for architects during the shorter 2002-2003 period—employment grew by 4,000 and the unemployment rate dropped from 2.6 percent to 2 percent. Between 2002 and 2003, the unemployment rate also fell among designers. But this decline stemmed from workers leaving the design labor force, rather than gaining employment as designers.

Conversely, more workers entered the labor market as writers and authors. In 2000, for example, there were 180,000 people in this occupation, 173,000 employed and 7,000 unemployed; by 2003, the writer and author labor market rose to 204,000—a gain of 24,000. But unemployment also increased, pushing the unemployment rate up from 3.7 percent in 2000 to 6.9 percent in 2003.

Secondary Artist Employment

The previous sections of this note describe workers in primary jobs.⁴ However, the BLS reports that 7.3 million workers, or 5.3 percent of the employed, were multiple jobholders in 2003. But, as the BLS occupational data show, the multiple jobholding rate for artists was more than twice the rate measured for all civilian workers.

Table 2 reports secondary employment in artist occupations. In 2003, 280,000 people held second jobs as artists. Of these, 108,000 were musicians and singers. In fact, measured as jobs as a share of all people in that occupation, 39.2 percent held second jobs as musicians or singers, the highest rate among all artists. The BLS also reports high secondary rates for announcers (27 percent) and actors (24.9 percent). On the other end of the scale, the BLS shows comparatively low rates of secondary employment among architects (4.5 percent), designers (5.1 percent), and dancers and choreographers (7.1 percent).

³ Year-over-year changes in employment and unemployment among actors may be insignificant due to small sample sizes.

⁴ Those holding more than one job are counted in the job in which they worked the most hours during the Current Population Survey week. This job is referred to as the primary job, while all other jobs held are defined as secondary jobs.

Median Earnings and Occupational Outlook

As discussed earlier, artists are classified as part of the combined professionals occupation group. According to data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS, professionals earned a median of \$38,809 in 2002. Table 3 shows that some artists earned well above the median for professionals. For example, at \$61,850, art directors recorded the highest median earnings among artists in 2002. Other high-paying artist occupations included, architects (\$56,620), commercial and fashion designers (\$52,260 and \$51,290), landscape architects (\$47,400), and producers and directors (\$46,240).

Some artists' earnings were comparable to that of all professionals, such as writers and authors (\$42,790), interior designers (\$39,189), and musicians and singers (\$36,290). And a number of artists earned incomes well below that of professionals (and other artists), including photographers (\$24,040), merchandise display designers (\$22,550), dancers (\$21,100), announcers (\$20,620), and floral designers (\$19,480).

The BLS projects average employment growth (defined as growth between 10 and 20 percent between 2002 and 2012) for most artist occupations shown in Table 3. Faster than average employment growth, however, is expected for architects and some designers. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* notes that employment of architects is strongly tied to the level of construction, particularly nonresidential construction, which is expected to expand over the 2002-2012 duration. In the case of landscape architects, BLS attributes projected employment growth to increases in residential and commercial construction and continued emphasis on ecology and the environment.

Among the design specialties, projected employment growth is highest for graphic designers. Due to the expanding market for Web-based information and expansion of the video entertainment market, including television and movies, the BLS expects graphic designer employment to grow by almost 22 percent between 2002 and 2012. High employment growth is also predicted for interior designers. This growth, the BLS notes, stems from rising demand for interior design of private homes, offices, restaurants and other retail establishments, and institutions that care for the rapidly growing elderly population.

Consolidation of radio and television stations, new technology, and the growth of alternative media sources, such as cable television and satellite radio, are factors contributing to declining employment of announcers—between 2002 and 2012, the BLS expects employment in this occupation to drop by 10.1 percent.

Education and Self-Employment

The BLS occupation data also reveal that most artist occupations require post-secondary education—12 of the 21 occupations listed in Table 13 show a bachelor's degree as the most significant level of education and training. Exceptions to this include

photographers, musicians and singers, actors, and fine artists, which are characterized by long-term on-the-job training.

Another characteristic of many of the artist occupations shown in Table 3 is a high rate of self-employment. In 2002, for instance, 67.9 percent of writers and authors were self-employed, the highest rate of all the artist occupations. High percentages in 2002 were also reported for fine artists (55.5 percent), art directors (53.8 percent), multimedia artists and animators (53.5 percent), and photographers (52.5 percent). Low rates of self-employment were shown for many of the performing artists, including actors (17.4 percent), choreographers (16.7 percent), and dancers (19.3 percent)

TECHNICAL NOTES

The employment estimates shown in tables 1 and 2 are annual averages based on published and unpublished data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of about 50,000 households conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The employed are persons who, during the reference week of the survey, did any work as paid employees, worked in their own business, profession, or on their own farm, or who worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers in an enterprise operated by a family member. Each employed person is counted only once, even if he or she holds more than one job. Multiple jobholders are counted in the job at which they worked the greatest number of hours during the reference week.

The unemployed are defined as experienced unemployed persons (the unemployed who have worked at any time in the past) who had no employment during the reference week, were available for work, except for temporary illness, and had made specific efforts to find employment some time during the 4-week-period ending with the reference week. The labor force comprises all persons classified as employed or unemployed, and the unemployment rate is the number of unemployed as a percent of the labor force. Apart from the category labeled “all artist occupations,” the unemployment rates listed in this note were obtained directly from the BLS using un-rounded data.

Questions about second jobs are asked of about half of the CPS respondents, specifically those in the “out-rotation” phase of the survey. For that reason, the figures shown in Tables 1 and 2 are based on different counts of workers. For example, Table 1, which shows estimates based on the full CPS, reports 180,000 workers employed in primary jobs as architects in 2003. The secondary employment figures shown in Table 2, however, were based on partial-CPS results, which estimated 175,000 employed in primary architecture jobs in 2003. Since full CPS results are the most reliable, the partial-survey estimates of primary employment are not shown in Table 2, even though the secondary employment counts and percentages are based on them.

The Research Division of the National Endowment for the Arts has produced notes on artist employment since 1983. More information about Research Division notes and reports can be found on the Endowment’s web site at www.arts.gov.

Table 1. The Artist Labor Force: Trends in Employment and Unemployment, 2000-2003

(in thousands)

Occupation	2000	2001	2002	2003	Change from 00-03
Total civilian workers, 16 years and over	142,149	143,274	144,327	145,869	3,720
Employed	136,891	136,933	136,485	137,736	845
Unemployed ¹	5,258	6,341	7,842	8,133	2,875
Unemployment rate	3.7%	4.4%	5.4%	5.6%	1.9
Professional occupations	27,217	27,860	28,217	28,924	1,707
Employed	26,710	27,213	27,358	27,995	1,285
Unemployed	507	647	859	929	422
Unemployment rate	1.9%	2.3%	3.0%	3.2%	1.3
All artist occupations	2,106	2,136	2,103	2,114	8
Employed	2,032	2,047	1,987	1,986	-46
Unemployed	74	89	116	128	54
Unemployment rate ²	3.5%	4.2%	5.5%	6.1%	2.5
Architects	212	198	181	184	-28
Employed	211	196	176	180	-31
Unemployed	1	2	5	4	3
Unemployment rate	0.4%	1.1%	2.6%	2.0%	1.6
Art directors, fine artists, and animators ³	261	250	239	224	-37
Employed	255	239	227	212	-43
Unemployed	6	11	12	12	6
Unemployment rate	2.2%	4.5%	5.1%	5.2%	3
Designers ⁴	843	897	865	834	-9
Employed	816	866	821	793	-23
Unemployed	27	31	44	41	14
Unemployment rate	3.2%	3.5%	5.1%	4.9%	1.7
Actors ⁵	30	32	46	46	16
Employed	24	21	32	30	6
Unemployed	6	11	14	16	10
Unemployment rate	19.9%	33.4%	30.4%	35.2%	15.3
Producers and directors	142	149	157	146	4
Employed	135	139	146	133	-2
Unemployed	7	10	11	13	6
Unemployment rate	4.8%	6.9%	6.7%	9.1%	4.3
Dancers and choreographers ⁵	36	31	30	35	-1
Employed	35	29	27	32	-3
Unemployed	1	2	3	3	2
Unemployment rate	2.4%	5.9%	11.1%	7.6%	5.2

Table 1. The Artist Labor Force: Trends in Employment and Unemployment, 2000-2003, Continued
(in thousands)

Occupation	2000	2001	2002	2003	Change From 00-03
Musicians and singers	173	192	166	189	16
Employed	164	185	159	179	15
Unemployed	9	7	7	10	1
Unemployment rate	5.1%	3.7%	4.3%	5.1%	0
Announcers	60	57	54	65	5
Employed	57	55	53	61	4
Unemployed	3	2	1	4	1
Unemployment rate	5.1%	3.0%	2.6%	6.4%	1.3
Writers and authors ⁶	180	161	193	204	24
Employed	173	153	183	190	17
Unemployed	7	8	10	14	7
Unemployment rate	3.7%	4.9%	5.1%	6.9%	3.2
Photographers	134	135	149	154	20
Employed	129	131	141	146	17
Unemployed	5	4	8	8	3
Unemployment rate	4.0%	2.8%	5.4%	5.3%	1.3
Other artists and entertainers ⁷	35	34	23	33	-2
Employed	33	33	22	30	-3
Unemployed	2	1	1	3	1
Unemployment rate	6.9%	4.3%	2.6%	7.7%	0.8

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Source: Published and unpublished data from the Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).
The BLS does not publish data for occupations with employment levels below 50,000.

¹Unemployed within occupational categories is measured as experienced unemployed, i.e., unemployed people who have worked at any time in the past. This number differs from BLS estimates of total U.S. unemployment because it excludes new entrants to the labor market.

²All unemployment rates shown, except the category "all artist occupations," were calculated by the BLS using unrounded data.

³Defined as art directors, fine artists (i.e., painters, sculptors, and illustrators), multimedia artists, and animators. The BLS labels this category "artists and related workers."

⁴Defined as commercial and industrial designers, fashion designers, floral designers, graphic designers, interior designers, visual merchandisers (e.g., window dressers), and set and exhibit designers.

⁵Year-over-year changes may be insignificant due to small sample sizes.

⁶Defined as workers who develop original fiction and non-fiction for books, magazines and trade journals, newspapers, on-line publications, company newsletters, radio and television broadcasts, motion pictures, and advertisements.

⁷The BLS labels this category "entertainers and performers, sports and related workers, and all other."

Table 2. Secondary Artist Jobs in 2003
(in thousands)

Occupation	Secondary job employment	Secondary jobs as a percent of persons employed in this occupation ¹
All artist occupations	280	12.7%
Architects	8	4.5%
Art directors, fine artists, and animators	25	10.4%
Designers	42	5.1%
Actors	11	24.9%
Producers and directors	10	6.6%
Dancers and choreographers	2	7.1%
Musicians and singers	108	39.2%
Announcers	6	27.0%
Writers and authors	22	12.7%
Photographers	26	11.7%
Other artists and entertainers	19	17.2%

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Source: Published and unpublished data from the Current Population Survey provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

¹ Both primary and secondary jobholders in an occupation. Percentages are based on total employment estimates not shown. See Technical Notes for a detailed explanation.

Table 3. Median Earnings and Projected Job Openings for Selected Artist Occupations

Occupation	2002 annual median earnings	Percent self-employed in 2002	Most significant source of postsecondary education or training	2002-2012 Employment change ²	
				Percent	Category
Architects	\$56,620	21.4%	Bachelor's degree	17.2%	Faster than average
Landscape architects	\$47,400	23.4%	Bachelor's degree	22.2%	Faster than average
Art directors	\$61,850	53.8%	Bachelor's plus experience	11.4%	Average
Fine artists (e.g., painters, sculptors)	\$35,260	55.5%	Long-term on-the-job	16.5%	Average
Multimedia artists and animators	\$43,980	53.5%	Bachelor's degree	15.8%	Average
Commercial and industrial designers	\$52,260	31.0%	Bachelor's degree	14.6%	Average
Fashion designers	\$51,290	29.3%	Bachelor's degree	10.6%	Average
Floral designers	\$19,480	32.5%	Moderate on-the-job	12.4%	Average
Graphic designers	\$36,680	31.8%	Bachelor's degree	21.9%	Faster than average
Interior designers	\$39,180	32.2%	Bachelor's degree	21.7%	Faster than average
Merchandise display	\$22,550	30.9%	Moderate on-the-job	11.3%	Average
Set and exhibit designers	\$33,870	32.2%	Bachelor's degree	20.9%	Faster than average
Actors	\$23,470	17.4%	Long-term on-the-job	17.7%	Average
Producers and directors	\$46,240	32.8%	Bachelor's plus experience	18.2%	Average
Dancers	\$21,100	19.3%	Long-term on-the-job	11.1%	Average
Choreographers	\$29,470	16.7%	Work experience in related occupation	15.8%	Average
Music directors and composers	\$31,310	39.3%	Bachelor's plus experience	13.5%	Average
Musicians and singers	\$36,290	38.3%	Long-term on-the-job	17.1%	Average
Announcers	\$20,620	34.4%	Long-term on-the-job	-10.1%	Decline
Writers and authors	\$42,790	67.9%	Bachelor's degree	16.1%	Average
Photographers	\$24,040	52.5%	Long-term on-the-job	13.6%	Average

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Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Statistics and Training Data and Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2004-2005.