



**NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS**

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**ARTIST EMPLOYMENT, 2005**  
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The 2005 labor market improved for the civilian work force and for most workers in artist occupations. Employment in artist jobs grew to 2.1 million workers, while the artist unemployment rate declined from 5.1% in 2004 to 4.4% in 2005.

This note reports on employment conditions of artists. Table 1 tracks 2002-2005 trends in primary artist employment, while Table 2 shows secondary artist employment in 2005. Table 3 reports average earnings and projected employment growth for artists, as well as training requirements for selected artist occupations.

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

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that employment rose and unemployment fell in 2005.<sup>1</sup> Continuing a trend that began in 2003, total civilian employment increased to 141.7 million in 2005—up from 139.3 million a year earlier. Civilian unemployment declined from the 2004 rate of 5.1% to 4.7% in 2005.

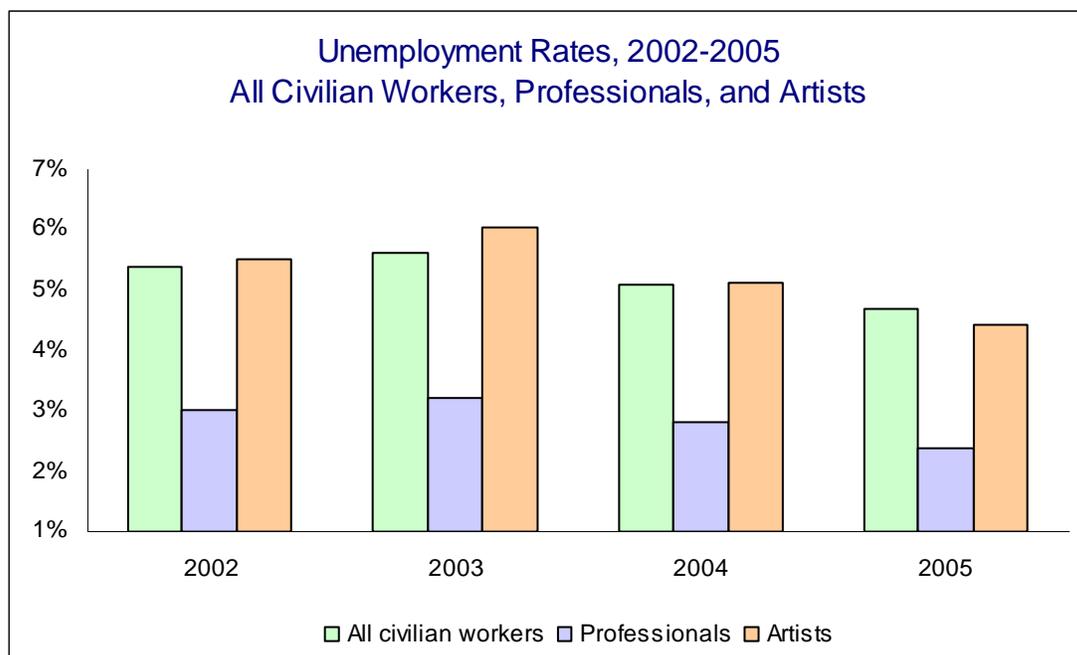
Between 2004 and 2005, employment in professional occupations (a broad list of jobs typically requiring higher levels of education) increased by 498,000 workers. The unemployment rate for professionals dropped from 2.8% to 2.4%.

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<sup>1</sup> Sok, Emy. "Lower Employment in 2005," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 2006.

Artists fall into the “professional” category, and their employment levels also grew. Between 2004 and 2005, “all artist” employment (obtained by totaling employment figures for all the artist jobs listed in Table 1) rose by 36,000 workers. Over the same period, the artist unemployment rate retreated to 4.4%—0.7 percentage points below the 2004 rate.

The following graph shows unemployment rates for all civilian workers, professionals, and artists in 2002 through 2005. Patterns for all three categories are similar—rising unemployment rates in 2003, followed by declines in 2004 and 2005. The graph also shows that unemployment rates for artists are nearly twice as high as rates for all professionals. In 2005, for example, the artist unemployment rate was 2 points higher than the rate for professionals as a whole.



### Individual Artist Occupations

While unemployment rates shrank for the combined all-artists category, conditions were mixed for individual artist occupations. Employment continued to improve for architects, the artist occupation with the lowest unemployment rate. Between 2004 and 2005, architect employment increased by 28,000 workers and the unemployment rate dropped by 0.3 points to reach 1.7%—a rate even lower than the 2.4% reported for all professionals.

Employment conditions also improved for musicians and singers. Over the 2004-2005 period, employment went up by 34,000 and the unemployment rate dipped from 5% to 4.6%. Announcers also gained. Employment in this category increased by 7,000 and the unemployment rate shed 7.1 points to reach 3.6%.

Unemployment rates fell for designers, writers, and authors. But those reductions stemmed from workers leaving designer and writing occupations, rather than from employment gains. Between 2004 and 2005, 31,000 workers left the designer labor market; 20,000 left the writing field.

Unemployment rates increased for photographers, other entertainers and performers, and for the category of art directors, fine artists, and animators.<sup>2</sup> In 2005, there were 11,000 unemployed art directors, fine artists, and animators—up from 8,000 in 2004. The unemployment rate for this category grew from 3.7% to 4.5%.

In 2005 the unemployment rate for actors fell to 25.5%—down 9.3 percentage points from 2004. Among dancers and choreographers, unemployment rose by 2,000, inching the rate up to 10.4%. Nevertheless, for all three professions—actors, dancers, and choreographers—the sample sizes are so small that year-over-year changes may be statistically insignificant.

### Secondary Employment

Previous sections of this note describe workers employed in art as a primary job.<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, however, secondary employment is high for artists. In 2005, the multiple jobholding rate for artists was 12.8%—more than twice the 5.3% reported for all civilian workers.

Table 2 reports secondary employment in artist occupations. More than 300,000 workers held secondary jobs as artists. Of this group, 96,000 were musicians and singers, the category with the highest multiple jobholding rate (32.1%). The BLS also reports high secondary job rates for radio and TV announcers (25.5%) and photographers (20.8%). Smaller percentages of workers held second jobs as architects (2.4%) and designers (6.5%).

### Median Earnings and Employment Growth, 2004-2014

As discussed earlier, artists are part of the combined professionals group. According to data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey, professionals drew median annual earnings of \$40,607 in 2004. Table 3 shows that some categories of artists earned well above the median for professionals. At \$63,840, art directors recorded the highest median earnings among artist occupations in 2004. Other high-paying artist jobs included architects (\$60,300), fashion designers (\$55,840), and landscape architects (\$53,120).

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<sup>2</sup> “Other entertainers and performers” is a broad category that includes occupations such as juggler, magician, comedian, cowboy, and fortuneteller.

<sup>3</sup> Workers employed in more than one job are counted by the job that consumed 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.

Some artists' earnings were comparable to the median for all professionals. These artist categories included writers and authors (\$44,350), interior designers (\$40,670), and fine artists (\$38,060). Still others earned well below other professionals (and other artists). Dancers, for example, earned a median of only \$17,763 in 2004. Other low-earnings artist categories included floral designers (\$20,450), radio and TV announcers (\$22,130), and photographers (\$26,080).

The BLS projects faster-than-average employment growth (defined as growth between 18 and 26%) for landscape architects. Increased construction and real estate development, amid greater compliance with environmental regulations, are contributing to expanded employment in landscape architecture.

The Bureau cites strong job competition and few new job openings as the reasons for slower-than-average employment growth for fashion designers. Similarly, a lack of growth in new radio and TV stations and a pattern of industry consolidation are curbing job opportunities for announcers.

The BLS projects average employment growth (9% to 17%) for the remaining 16 occupations in Table 3. Multimedia artists and animators will face stiff job competition. Yet those job categories are expected to fare better than for other fine artists due to increased demand for videos games, movie special effects, and computer graphics for expanding mobile technologies.

Reduced funding combined with rising production costs of dance works, at least for small and mid-sized companies, will limit job opportunities for dancers and choreographers. Rather, the BLS projects that any growth in dancer and choreographer employment will stem from large dance companies and troupes affiliated with universities, in addition to job growth from the movie, music video, and fitness industries.

Average employment growth is expected not only for dancers and choreographers but also for musicians and singers. The BLS notes that most new wage-and-salary jobs (excluding self-employment) for musicians will arise from religious organizations.

### Education and Self-Employment

The BLS occupation data also reveal that many artist occupations require post-secondary training—8 of the 19 jobs listed in Table 3 name either an associate's or bachelor's degree as the most significant level of education or training. Three more occupations (art directors, producers and directors, and music directors and composers) list degrees plus extensive work experience.

A number of artist jobs are characterized by high rates of self-employment. In 2004, for example, 68% of writers and authors were self-employed—the highest rate for all the artist occupations. High percentages were also reported for fine artists (62%), multimedia artists and animators (61%), and photographers (59%). Low self-employment rates were shown for several of the performing artists, including actors (17%), choreographers (18%), and dancers (20%).

### 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 greater 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. Workers employed in multiple jobs are counted by the job that exacted the greatest number of hours during the reference week.

The unemployed are defined as “experienced”—in other words, unemployed people who have worked at any time in the past and who had no employment during the reference week. These people were available for work, unless they had a 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 ranked employed or unemployed, and the unemployment rate is the number of unemployed as a percentage 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 unrounded data.

Questions about second jobs targeted roughly 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 235,000 workers employed in primary jobs as architects in 2005. The secondary employment figures shown in Table 2, however, were based on partial-CPS results, which estimated 257,000 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 partial data provides the basis for secondary employment counts and percentages.

Table 1. The Artist Labor Force: Trends in Employment and Unemployment, 2002-2005

(Employment and unemployment in thousands)

(pp=percentage points)

Occupation	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change '04-'05
Total civilian workers, 16 years and over	144,327	145,869	146,715	148,655	1,940
Employed	136,485	137,736	139,252	141,730	2,478
Unemployed <sup>1</sup>	7,842	8,133	7,463	6,925	-538
Unemployment rate	5.4%	5.6%	5.1%	4.7%	-0.4 pp
Professional occupations	28,217	28,924	29,098	29,503	405
Employed	27,358	27,995	28,297	28,795	498
Unemployed	859	929	801	708	-93
Unemployment rate	3.0%	3.2%	2.8%	2.4%	-0.4 pp
All artist occupations	2,103	2,114	2,142	2,164	22
Employed	1,987	1,986	2,032	2,068	36
Unemployed	116	128	110	96	-14
Unemployment rate <sup>2</sup>	5.5%	6.1%	5.1%	4.4%	-0.7 pp
Architects	181	184	211	239	28
Employed	176	180	207	235	28
Unemployed	5	4	4	4	0
Unemployment rate	2.6%	2.0%	2.0%	1.7%	-0.3 pp
Art directors, fine artists, and animators <sup>3</sup>	239	224	230	245	15
Employed	227	212	222	234	12
Unemployed	12	12	8	11	3
Unemployment rate	5.1%	5.2%	3.7%	4.5%	0.8 pp
Designers <sup>4</sup>	865	834	834	803	-31
Employed	821	793	792	774	-18
Unemployed	44	41	42	29	-13
Unemployment rate	5.1%	4.9%	5.1%	3.6%	-1.5 pp
Actors <sup>5</sup>	46	46	45	55	10
Employed	32	30	29	41	12
Unemployed	14	16	16	14	-2
Unemployment rate	30.4%	35.2%	34.8%	25.5%	-9.3 pp
Producers and directors	157	146	142	129	-13
Employed	146	133	137	124	-13
Unemployed	11	13	5	5	0
Unemployment rate	6.7%	9.1%	3.7%	3.7%	0.0 pp
Dancers and choreographers <sup>5</sup>	30	35	27	35	8
Employed	27	32	25	31	6
Unemployed	3	3	2	4	2
Unemployment rate	11.1%	7.6%	8.4%	10.4%	2.0 pp

Table 1. The Artist Labor Force: Trends in Employment and Unemployment, 2002-2005

Continued

Occupation	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change from 04-05
Musicians and singers	166	189	188	223	35
Employed	159	179	179	213	34
Unemployed	7	10	9	10	1
Unemployment rate	4.3%	5.1%	5.0%	4.6%	-0.4 pp
Announcers	54	65	60	63	3
Employed	53	61	54	61	7
Unemployed	1	4	6	2	-4
Unemployment rate	2.6%	6.4%	10.7%	3.6%	-7.1 pp
Writers and authors <sup>6</sup>	193	204	205	185	-20
Employed	183	190	194	178	-16
Unemployed	10	14	11	7	-4
Unemployment rate	5.1%	6.9%	5.6%	4.0%	-1.6 pp
Photographers	149	154	164	158	-6
Employed	141	146	158	150	-8
Unemployed	8	8	6	8	2
Unemployment rate	5.4%	5.3%	3.6%	4.8%	1.2 pp
Other entertainers and performers	23	33	36	29	-7
Employed	22	30	35	27	-8
Unemployed	1	3	1	2	1
Unemployment rate	2.6%	7.7%	1.9%	6.7%	4.8 pp

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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.

<sup>1</sup>Unemployed 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.

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup>Year-over-year changes may be insignificant due to small sample sizes.

<sup>6</sup>Defined 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.

**Table 2. Secondary Artist Jobs in 2005**  
(in thousands)

Occupation	Secondary job employment	Multiple jobholding rate <sup>1</sup>
All artist occupations	303	12.8%
Architects	6	2.4%
Art directors, fine artists, and animators	32	11.9%
Designers	55	6.5%
Actors	5	11.8%
Producers and directors	13	10.1%
Dancers and choreographers	3	9.2%
Musicians and singers	96	32.1%
Announcers	21	25.5%
Writers and authors	33	15.6%
Photographers	37	20.8%
Other entertainers and performers	3	9.0%

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Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>1</sup> Secondary jobs as a percentage of persons employed in this occupation.

Table 3. Median Earnings and Projected Employment for Selected Artist Occupations

Occupation	2004 annual median earnings	Employment change		Percent self-employed in 2004	Post-secondary education or training
		Percent	Category		
		2004-2014			
Architects	\$60,300	17.3%	Average	20.0%	Bachelor's degree
Landscape architects	\$53,120	19.4%	Faster than average	24.0%	Bachelor's degree
Art directors	\$63,840	11.5%	Average	56.0%	Degree plus work experience
Multi-media artists and animators	\$50,360	14.1%	Average	61.0%	Bachelor's degree
Fine artists (e.g., painters, sculptors)	\$38,060	10.2%	Average	62.0%	Long-term on-the-job
Commercial and industrial designers	\$52,310	10.8%	Average	30.0%	Bachelor's degree
Fashion designers	\$55,840	8.4%	Slower than average	26.0%	Associate's degree
Floral designers	\$20,450	10.3%	Average	31.0%	Moderate-term on-the-job
Graphic designers	\$38,030	15.2%	Average	26.0%	Bachelor's degree
Interior designers	\$40,670	15.5%	Average	25.0%	Associate's degree
Actors	\$23,460	16.1%	Average	17.0%	Long-term on-the-job
Producers and directors	\$52,840	16.6%	Average	30.0%	Degree plus work experience
Dancers	\$17,760	16.8%	Average	20.0%	Long-term on-the-job
Choreographers	\$33,670	16.8%	Average	18.0%	Work experience in related occupation
Music directors and composers	\$34,570	10.4%	Average	45.0%	Degree plus work experience
Musicians and singers	\$37,130	14.0%	Average	41.0%	Long-term on-the-job
Announcers	\$22,130	-6.5%	Decline	25.0%	Long-term on-the-job
Writers and authors	\$44,350	17.7%	Average	68.0%	Bachelor's degree
Photographers	\$26,080	12.3%	Average	59.0%	Long-term on-the-job

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Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Projections and Training data and *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2006-2007 edition.