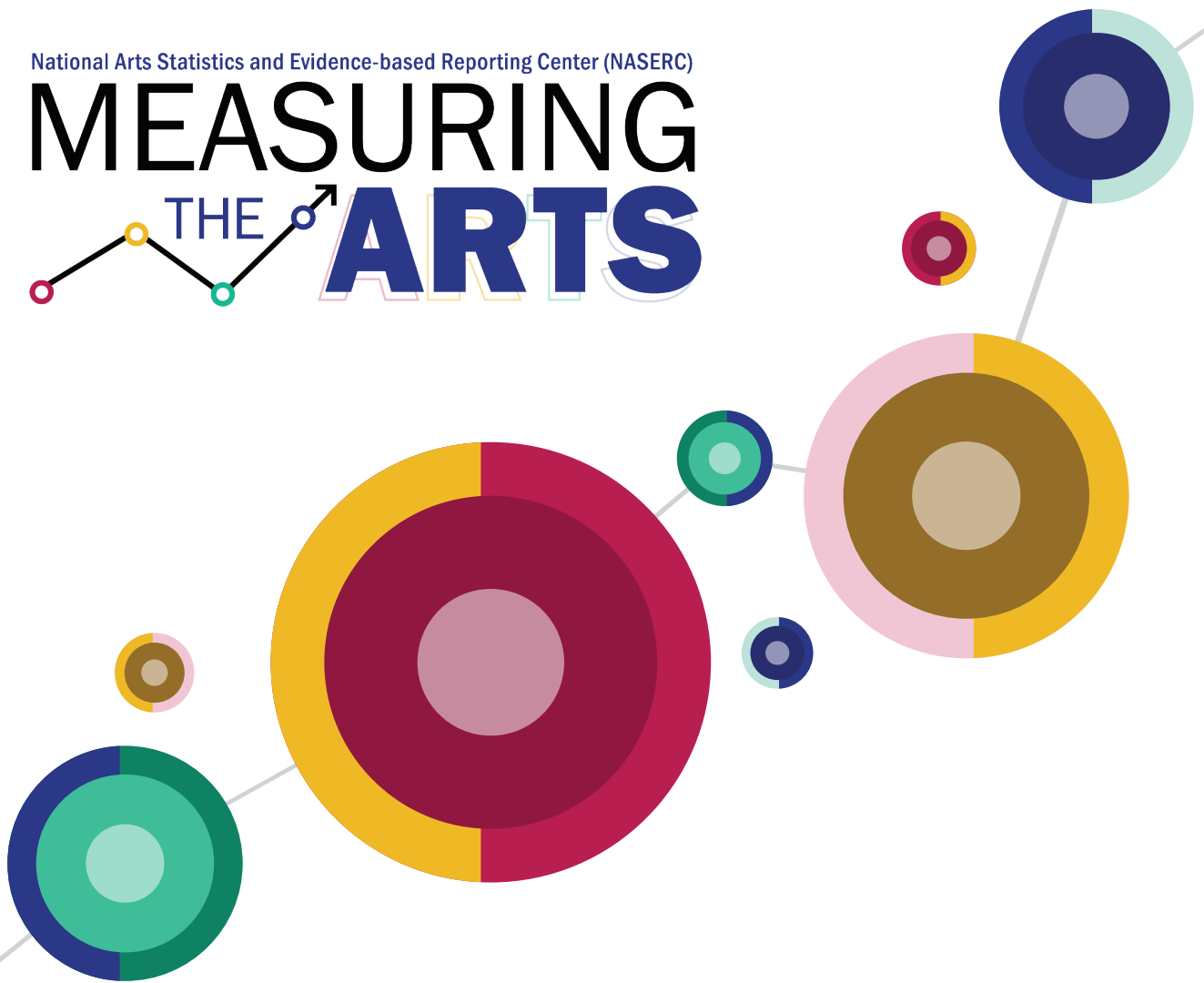


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

MEASURING THE ARTS



Domain A

Artists and Other Cultural Workers



Indicator A.1: **Who Are the Artists?**

Introduction

Artists in the United States represent a diverse group of talented individuals who share a passion for expressing themselves through art and design. Artistry and design constitute key elements of our social fabric and contribute substantially to total economic activity in the country. Indicator A.1 explores the characteristics of artists in the U.S. labor force. In this and other indicators in the series, artists have been defined by their self-reported primary occupation.¹ For more information on this definition, see the *Artist Definition*. Individuals whose occupation is not covered under the artist definition but are employed in a role that supports the arts are described in **Indicator A.2: Who Are the Other Cultural Workers?** Those who personally perform or create art—regardless of whether it is part of their employment—are described in **Indicator B.3: Who is Personally Creating or Performing Art?** The arts teacher workforce, which is also not captured in this indicator but constitute a major category of worker in the arts, is described in **Indicator D.2: Who Teaches the Arts in Schools?**

Artist Definition

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has developed a list of 13 specific artist occupations^a: architects; landscape architects; fine artists, art directors, and animators; designers; actors; producers and directors; dancers and choreographers; music directors and composers; musicians; entertainers; announcers; writers and authors; and photographers. These occupations have been used in this indicator, though some categories have been combined for reporting purposes.



^a For more information, see the 2022 NEA publication [Arts Data Profile #31—Artists in the Workforce: National and State Estimates for 2015-2019](#).

This indicator includes artists who are in the labor force—i.e., either currently employed in an artist occupation or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. It captures employed artists in the labor force regardless of work intensity (full-time or part-time status) and class of worker (private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed). Detailed information on the labor force status and employment characteristics of artists, including trends in employment and unemployment rates, individuals holding primary and secondary jobs in the arts, and differences by work intensity and class of worker, will be described in **Indicator A.5: What is the Labor Market Status of Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**

Types of Artists

In 2021, there were approximately 2.6 million artists in the total U.S. labor force, which reflects an increase since 2010, when there were 2.1 million artists in the labor force. Also, the percentage of artists in the labor force increased from 1.3 percent in 2010 to 1.6 percent in 2021.² Among the 2.6 million artists in the labor force in 2021, the artist occupations³ with the highest number of artists were designers (960,000), fine artists (307,000), architects (266,000), writers (249,000), producers (226,000), musicians (206,000), and photographers (203,000; **Figure A1-1**). The number of artists in most artist occupations increased between 2010 and 2021. The only artist occupation with a measurable decrease in this time period was dancers, which decreased from 27,000 in 2010 to 18,000 in 2021. The more recent time period of 2019 and 2021, which included the COVID-19 pandemic, had more varied changes.⁴ During this time period, the number of designers increased by 158,000 between 2019 and 2021 and the number of fine artists increased by 111,000, the two largest increases among artistic

1 “Primary occupation” refers to the kind of work a person does for pay most of the time. The American Community Survey (ACS)—the data source on which this indicator is based—asks only about the occupation corresponding with a respondent’s current or most recent job or, if they have two or more jobs, the job with the most usual hours worked. For more information see https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2021_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf.

2 Differences between estimates (including trends over time) are stated only when they are statistically significant, based on a 95 percent level of confidence. For more information see *The Arts in the United States: Developing Key National Indicators of Arts Activity* report.

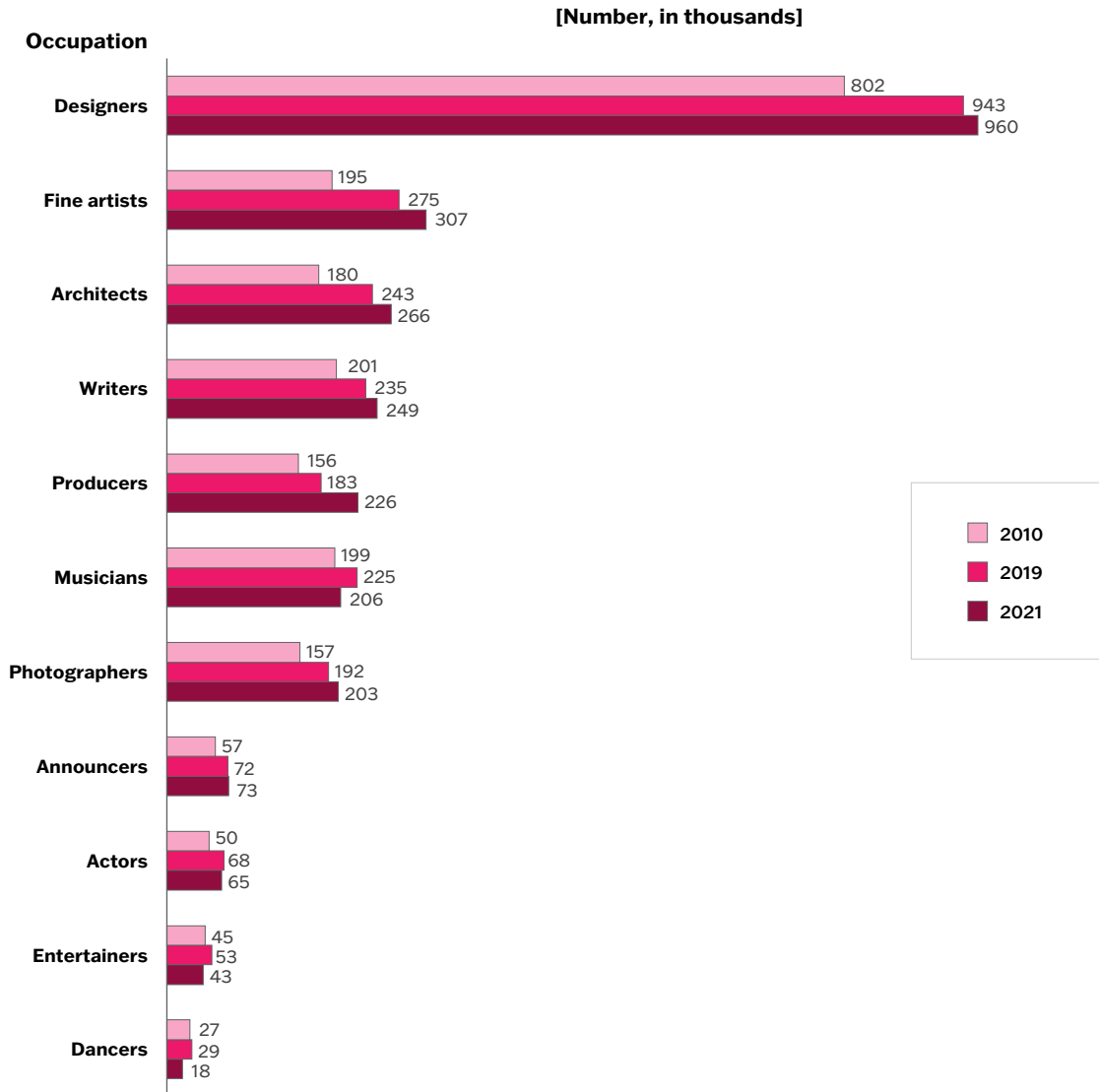
3 “Architects” include architects and landscape architects. “Dancers” include dancers and choreographers. “Fine artists” include fine artists, art directors and animators. “Musicians” include musicians, music directors and composers. “Producers” include producers and directors. “Writers” include writers and authors.

4 Comparisons are made between 2019 and 2021 to highlight changes that may have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 on survey operations, the Census Bureau has classified the 2020 ACS as experimental. The very large impact of the pandemic on employment in 2020 makes the data difficult to interpret.

occupations. The number of dancers, musicians, and entertainers (which includes clowns, comedians, and magicians, among other occupations) decreased between 2019 and 2021. It may be reasonable to

assume that the loss of live performances during the COVID-19 shutdowns played a role in these declines among dancers, musicians, and entertainers.

Figure A1-1. Number of artists in the total labor force, by artist occupation: 2010, 2019, and 2021



NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. Data from 2019 and 2021 are included to compare artists in the labor force before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from 2010 are included for long-term trend comparisons to 2019 and 2021 data. Data on 2020 are not analyzed because, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection, the Census Bureau considers the 2020 1-year American Community Survey (ACS) to be experimental. Experimental data may not meet all Census Bureau quality standards and reflect new data sources or methodologies. Due to the variance properties of the experimental estimation methodology, the variance estimates for some Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) estimates may be smaller than expected when compared to the equivalent variance estimates from previous years. See reference on page 16 of https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/experimental/2020/documentation/pums/ACS2020_PUMS_README.pdf. “Architects” include architects and landscape architects. “Dancers” include dancers and choreographers. “Fine artists” include fine artists, art directors and animators. “Musicians” include music directors, composers, and musicians. “Producers” include producers and directors. “Writers” include writers and authors. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010, 2019, and 2021.

Diversity Among Artists



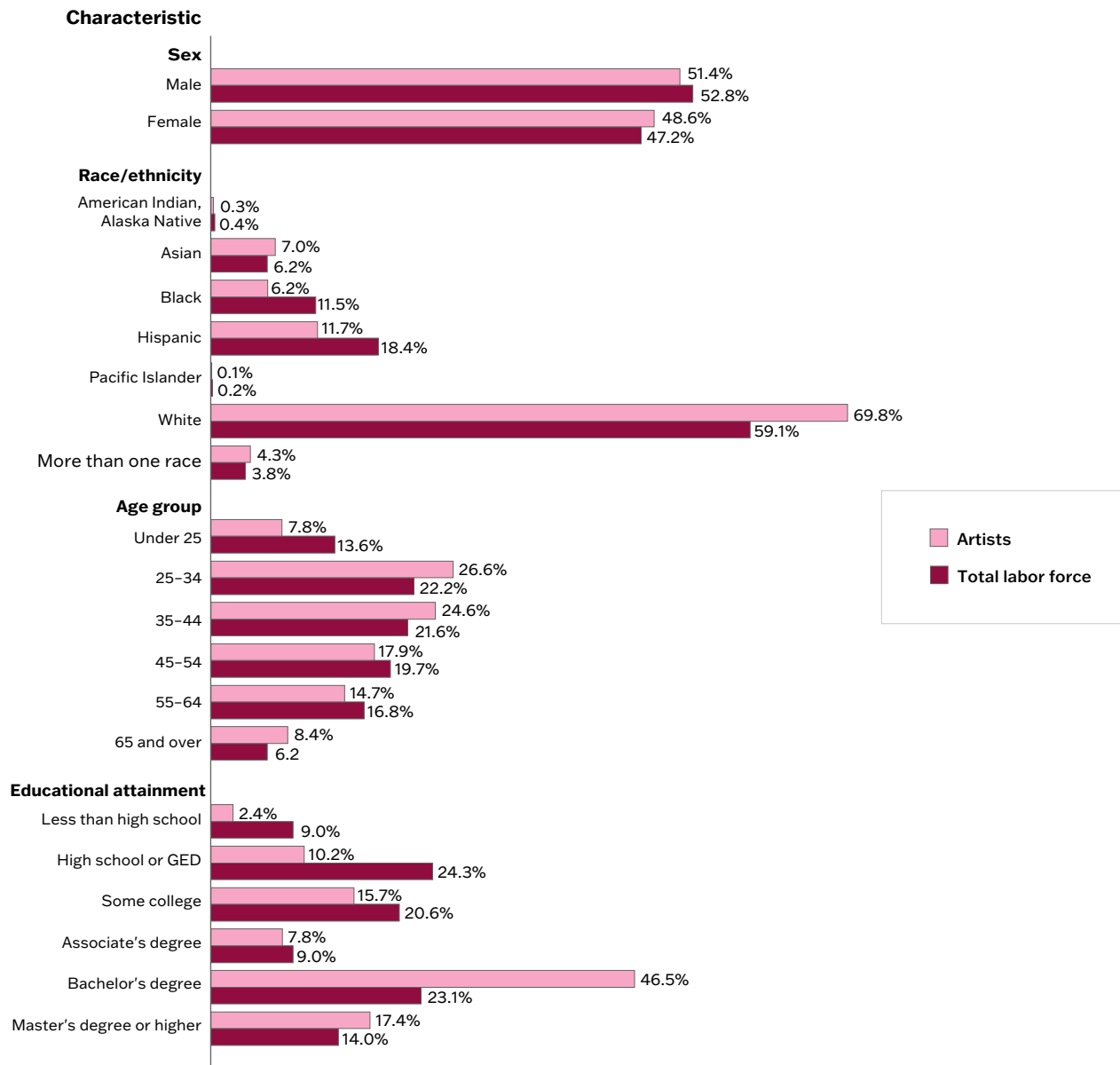
When artists in the labor force are compared with the total U.S. labor force in general, they are a comparatively less diverse population (**Figure A1-2**). Overall, in 2021, artists in the labor force were more likely to be female, White, Asian, or of more than one race, and less likely to be male, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native than the total labor force. For example, while the percentage of females among artists (49 percent) was higher than for the total labor force (47 percent), the percentage of artists who were White (70 percent) was higher than for the total labor force (59 percent) and the percentage of artists who were Black (6 percent) or Hispanic (12 percent) was lower than for the total labor force (11 percent and 18 percent, respectively).

The distribution of artists in the labor force by age group shows a complex picture. The percentage of artists aged 65 and over in 2021 was higher (8 percent) compared to the total labor force (6 percent), whereas the percentage of artists aged less than 25 was lower (8 percent versus 14 percent). On the other hand, the percentage of artists aged 25–34 and aged 35–44 was higher than for the total labor force, and the percentage of artists aged 45–54 and aged 55–64 was lower.

In 2021, artists in the labor force were generally better educated than the total labor force. Fewer artists had not completed high school (2 percent) compared to the total labor force (9 percent). Also, fewer artists had completed only high school (10 percent versus 24 percent) or attended only some college⁵ (16 percent versus 21 percent). In contrast, twice as many artists had completed a bachelor’s degree (46 percent) compared to the total labor force (23 percent). Also, 17 percent of artists had completed a master’s degree or higher compared to 14 percent of those in total labor force.

⁵ “Some college” includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree.

Figure A1-2. Percentage distribution of artists and the total labor force, by sex, race/ethnicity, age group, and educational attainment: 2021



NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. Race groups are mutually exclusive; persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race. Data for some race categories are not available due to small sample size. "Some college" includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021.

Artist Occupations



In addition to the substantial differences in the demographics of artists in the labor force compared to total the labor force, there were also important differences among the artist occupation groups themselves.

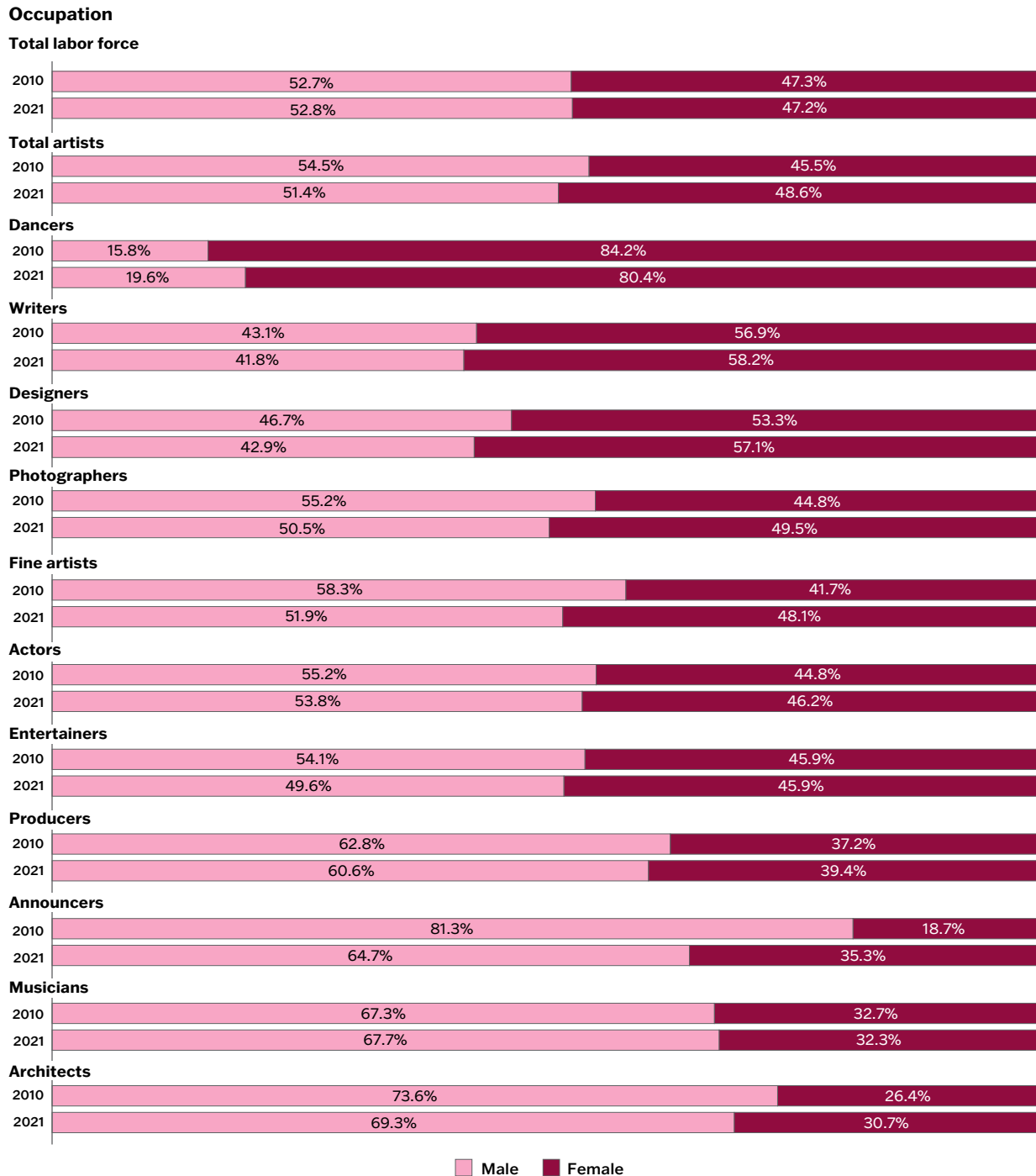
The percentage of females in artist occupations ranged from lows of 31 percent for architects and 32 percent for musicians to a high of 80 percent for dancers (**Figure A1-3**). The percentage of females was also above 50 percent for designers (57 percent) and writers (58 percent). The percentage of females among artists, overall, increased by 3 percentage points between 2010 and 2021 to 49 percent, whereas the percentage of females among the total labor force remained at about 47 percent during this period. The largest increase in the percentage of females between 2010 and 2021 was for announcers, which increased from 19 percent to 35 percent.

As noted previously, the percentage of Black and Hispanic persons among artists was lower compared to the percentage of these groups in the total labor force (**Figure A1-4**). Overall, the percentage of artists who were Black (6 percent) was about half that of the total labor force who were Black (11 percent). Black artists were least represented among architects (3 percent), designers (4 percent), and fine artists (5 percent), whereas Black artists were most highly represented among actors (15 percent). The percentage of artists who were Hispanic (12 percent) was about 7 percentage points lower than that of the total labor force. Hispanic artists were least represented among writers (7 percent), architects (10 percent), actors (11 percent), musicians (11 percent) and designers

(12 percent). The artistic occupation with the highest percentage of Hispanic artists was dancers (25 percent), which exceeded the overall Hispanic percentage in the total labor force (18 percent). The percentage of Asian artists (7 percent) was slightly higher than that of the total labor force (6 percent). The percentage of architects and designers who were Asian exceeded the percentage within the total labor force (12 percent and 10 percent, respectively), but within other artist occupations, the percentage who were Asian was lower than that of the total labor force.

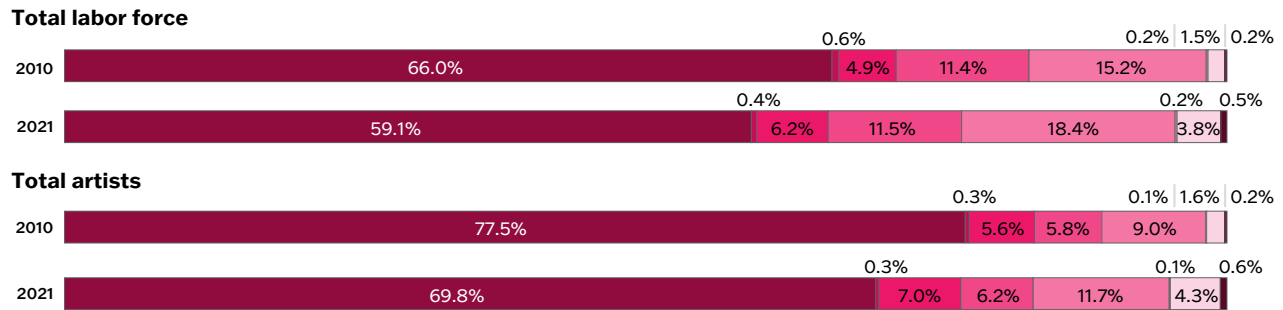
There were increases in the racial/ethnic diversity of artists in the labor force between 2010 and 2021. The percentage of fine artists who were Black increased from 3 percent in 2010 to 5 percent in 2021, and the percentage of photographers who were Black increased from 6 percent to 9 percent. The percentage of artists who were Hispanic increased overall and in the majority of the specific artist occupations. For example, the percentage of dancers who were Hispanic increased from 12 percent in 2010 to 25 percent in 2021, and the percentage of Hispanic fine artists increased from 9 percent to 14 percent. The percentage of artists who were Asian increased overall from 6 percent in 2010 to 7 percent in 2021, and there were also increases for the percentage who were architects (10 percent to 12 percent) and designers (7 percent to 10 percent). The percentage of artists who were of more than one race increased from 2 percent to 4 percent during this period.

Figure A1-3. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and sex: 2010 and 2021



NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. “Architects” include architects and landscape architects. “Dancers” include dancers and choreographers. “Fine artists” include fine artists, art directors, and animators. “Musicians” include music directors, composers, and musicians. “Producers” include producers and directors. “Writers” include writers and authors.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2021.

Figure A1-4. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2021



Occupation	Year	White	AI/AN	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	More than one race	Unspecified race
Dancers	2010	60.6%	‡	3.3% !	17.0%	12.2%	‡	5.4% !	‡
	2021	47.8%	‡	‡	11.8%	25.4%	‡	10.0%	‡
Entertainers	2010	72.8%	‡	3.6%	9.5%	10.8%	‡	2.5% !	‡
	2021	61.7%	‡	2.5% !	12.3%	14.5%	‡	8.6%	‡
Actors	2010	72.9%	‡	2.0% !	11.2%	8.7%	‡	4.0%	‡
	2021	62.5%	‡	4.5%	14.8%	10.9%	‡	5.8%	‡
Announcers	2010	70.5%	‡	3.2%	10.3%	13.8%	‡	1.5% !	‡
	2021	66.3%	‡	4.3%	10.0%	14.5%	‡	4.4%	‡
Musicians	2010	72.9%	‡	4.0%	13.0%	8.1%	‡	1.5%	‡
	2021	67.6%	‡	4.3%	11.8%	10.9%	‡	4.7%	0.5% !
Photographers	2010	78.5%	‡	3.6%	6.3%	10.1%	‡	1.2%	‡
	2021	68.2%	‡	4.7%	8.9%	12.4%	‡	4.8%	0.5% !
Fine artists	2010	79.5%	1.1% !	5.7%	3.4%	8.8%	‡	1.3%	‡
	2021	69.4%	0.6% !	5.4%	5.0%	14.0%	‡	4.9%	0.8%
Designers	2010	77.4%	0.2%	6.8%	4.1%	9.9%	‡	1.4%	0.2% !
	2021	69.6%	0.4%	9.6%	4.1%	11.7%	0.1% !	3.9%	0.6%
Producers	2010	75.9%	‡	4.2%	7.1%	10.4%	‡	1.9%	‡
	2021	70.3%	‡	4.0%	8.2%	13.3%	‡	3.9%	0.3% !
Architects	2010	80.4%	‡	9.6%	1.7%	7.3%	‡	0.8%	‡
	2021	71.4%	‡	11.9%	2.7%	10.1%	‡	3.5%	0.3% !
Writers	2010	84.8%	0.6% !	3.8%	5.2%	3.6%	‡	1.7%	0.2% !
	2021	78.0%	‡	3.6%	6.2%	7.3%	‡	4.0%	0.8% !

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. "Architects" include architects and landscape architects. "Dancers" include dancers and choreographers. "Fine artists" include fine artists, art directors, and animators. "Musicians" include music directors, composers, and musicians. "Producers" include producers and directors. "Writers" include writers and authors. Race groups are mutually exclusive; persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race. Data for some categories are not available due to small sample size.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2021.

While there was a general pattern for fewer artists in the labor force among the youngest age group and more artists among the oldest age group compared to the total labor force, there were substantial differences among artist occupations in 2021 (Figure A1-5). Given that some occupations normally require college degrees, it may be anticipated that there would be relatively few artists aged less than 25 in such fields as architecture (3 percent). Also, the percentage of producers aged less than 25 (5 percent) was relatively low. In contrast, the percentage of dancers aged less than 25 (37 percent) was much higher than the percentage of the total labor force aged less than 25 (14 percent). The group aged 25–34 showed smaller

differences for most occupations, with the percentage of artists overall in this age group (27 percent) higher than their representation in the total labor force (22 percent). The percentage of dancers (39 percent), photographers (30 percent), producers (29 percent), actors (29 percent), designers (28 percent), fine artists (28 percent), and writers (25 percent) aged 25–34 was higher than the percentage in the total labor force. The percentage of musicians (20 percent), architects (11 percent), writers (10 percent), and fine artists (9 percent) in the oldest age group (aged 65 and over) were above that of the total labor force (6 percent). The percentage of producers aged 65 and over (3 percent) was lower than that of the total labor force.

Figure A1-5. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and age group: 2021

Total labor force



Total artists



Occupation	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Architects	3%	21%	23%	22%	20%	11%
Producers	5%	29%	30%	21%	11%	3%
Fine artists	6%	28%	25%	19%	13%	9%
Writers	8%	25%	22%	19%	16%	10%
Designers	8%	28%	25%	18%	15%	7%
Musicians	9%	22%	19%	13%	18%	20%
Actors	10%	29%	25%	15%	13%	9%
Photographers	11%	30%	27%	15%	11%	6%
Announcers	11%	24%	29%	16%	12%	7%
Entertainers	18%	26%	22%	16%	11%	7%
Dancers	37%	39%	13%	8% !	‡	‡

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. “Architects” include architects and landscape architects. “Dancers” include dancers and choreographers. “Fine artists” include fine artists, art directors, and animators. “Musicians” include music directors, composers, and musicians. “Producers” include producers and directors. “Writers” include writers and authors. Data for some categories not available due to small sample size.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021.

As previously noted, artists in the labor force tended to have more education than the total labor force in 2021. However, a deeper look at the percentages by artist occupation show some exceptions and variations to the overall trend (Figure A1-6). The percentage of artists overall who had not completed high school (2 percent) was lower than that of the total labor force (9 percent), but there was no measurable difference for dancers (9 percent) and entertainers (7 percent). The percentage of persons in most artist occupations who had only completed high school (ranging from 2 percent to 17 percent) was lower than that of the total labor force (24 percent), with the exception of dancers, for whom the percentage was higher (40 percent). The percentage of persons in most artistic occupations who had obtained a bachelor's

degree (ranging from 31 percent for entertainers to 57 percent for producers) was higher than that of the total labor force (23 percent), though the percentage for dancers was not measurably different (21 percent). Compared to the total labor force, a larger percentage of artists had a master's degree or higher (17 percent compared to 14 percent), but the pattern was not consistent across artist occupations. Architects (41 percent), writers (31 percent), musicians (22 percent), and producers (17 percent) were more likely to have a master's degree or higher compared to the total labor force (14 percent); designers (11 percent), photographers (8 percent), and entertainers (6 percent) were less likely. Differences for other groups were not measurable due to small sample sizes.

Figure A1-6. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and age group: 2021

Total labor force



Total artists



Occupation	Less than high school	High school or GED	Some college	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree or higher
Entertainers	7%	17%	33%	5%	31%	6%
Photographers	3%	15%	24%	11%	40%	8%
Designers	2%	10%	15%	11%	50%	11%
Announcers	5%	15%	22%	8%	38%	12%
Actors	5%	12%	17%	7%	46%	13%
Fine artists	4%	14%	20%	8%	41%	14%
Producers	2%	6%	13%	5%	57%	17%
Musicians	4%	13%	22%	5%	33%	22%
Writers	1%	5%	10%	3%	50%	31%
Architects	1%	2%	4%	3%	50%	41%
Dancers	9%	40%	21%	8%	21%	†

NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. "Architects" include architects and landscape architects. "Dancers" include dancers and choreographers. "Fine artists" include fine artists, art directors, and animators. "Musicians" include music directors, composers, and musicians. "Producers" include producers and directors. "Writers" include writers and authors. "Some college" includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree. Data for some categories not available due to small sample size.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021.

Other Differences



- Artists in the labor force were less likely to live without a spouse or partner in 2021 compared to the total labor force (39 percent versus 44 percent).
- Artists in the labor force were more likely than the total labor force to live with either an opposite-sex spouse or partner (58 percent versus 55 percent) or same-sex spouse or partner (2 percent versus 1 percent).
- Artists in the labor force were less likely to be veterans than the total labor force in 2021 (3 percent versus 5 percent).
- Artists in the labor force were slightly less likely to have a disability than the total labor force in 2021 (6 percent versus 7 percent).

