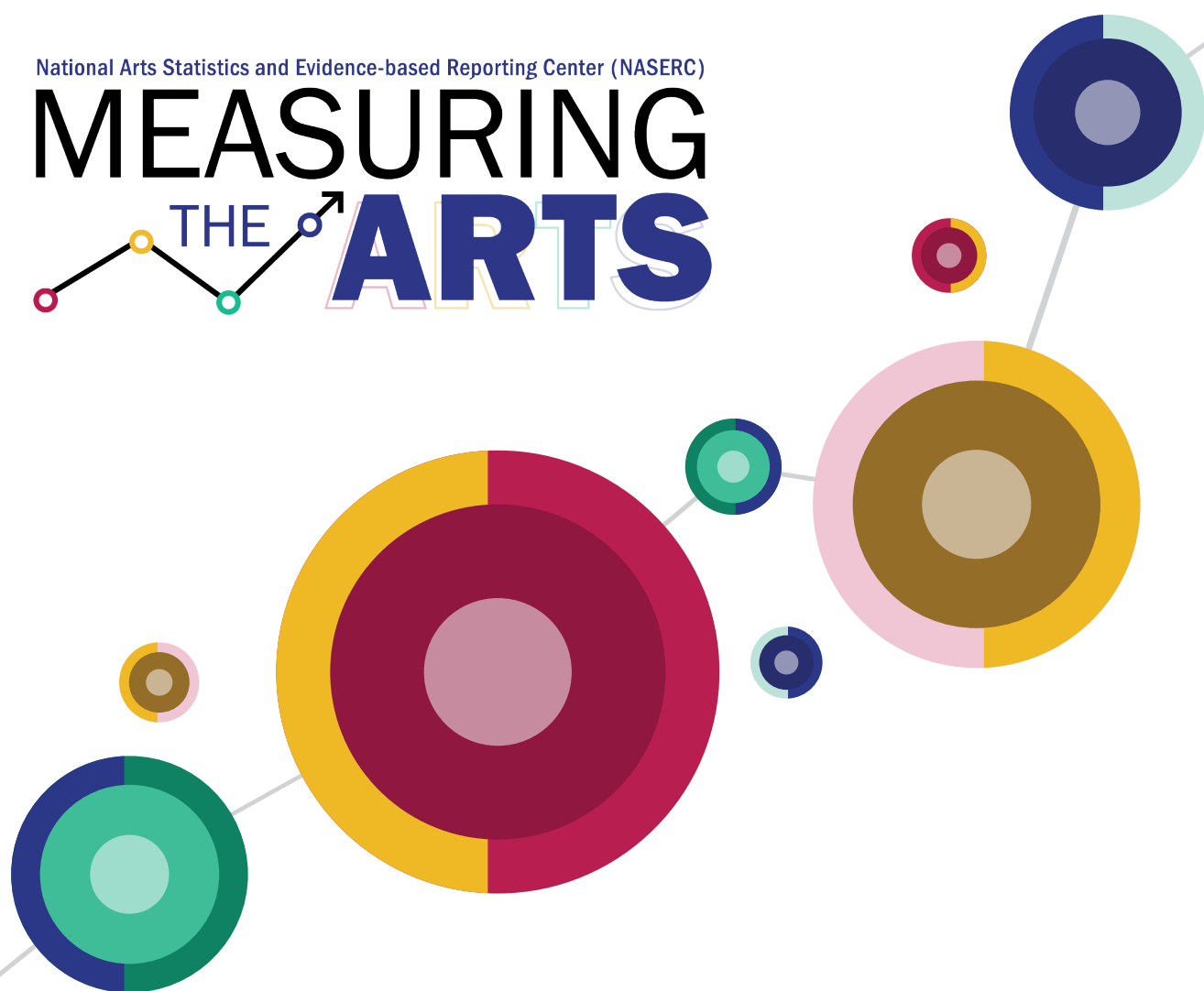


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

# 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.<sup>1</sup> For more information on this definition, see *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 greater detail in **Indicator A.2: Who Are the Other Cultural Workers?** Young artists in the workforce are described in **Indicator A.8: What Are the Labor Market Outcomes for Young Artists and 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 constitutes a major category of workers in the arts, is described in **Indicator D.2: Who Teaches the Arts in Schools?**

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, will be described in **Indicator A.5: What is the Labor Market Status of Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**

## Types of artists

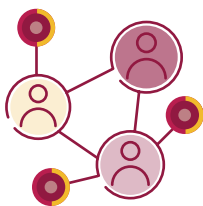


In 2022, there were approximately 2.7 million artists in the total U.S. labor force (see **Table A1-1**). This is a 5 percent increase since 2021, when there were 2.6 million artists in the labor force and an overall increase of 32 percent since 2010, when there were 2.1 million artists in the labor force.<sup>2</sup> The percentage of artists in the total workforce in 2022 remained steady from the year before (1.6 percent) but has increased 1.3 percent from 2010.

Among the 2.7 million artists in the labor force in 2022, the artist occupations<sup>3</sup> with the highest number of artists were designers (997,000), fine artists (331,000), architects (268,000), writers (262,000), producers (241,000), musicians (231,000), and photographers (200,000; **Figure A1-1**). The number of artists across all occupations in 2022 either met or exceeded the number of artists reported in 2010. As with many occupations, the number of artists reported in 2022 suggests a rebound from the dramatic decreases

### Artist definition

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has developed a list of 13 specific artist occupations:<sup>a</sup> 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.



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

<sup>1</sup> “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/2022\\_ACSsubjectDefinitions.pdf](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2022_ACSsubjectDefinitions.pdf).

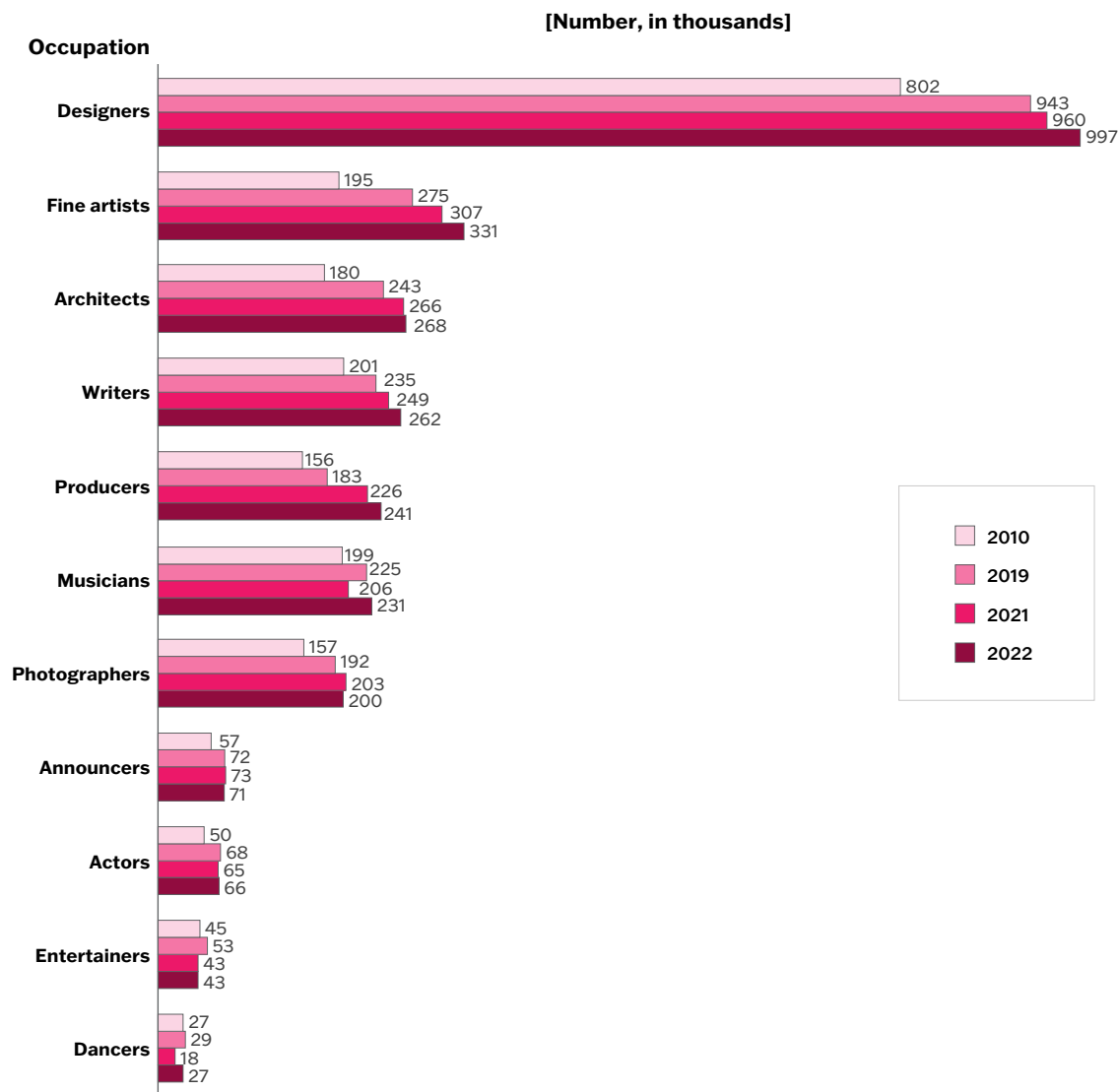
<sup>2</sup> Differences between estimates (including trends over time) are stated only when they are statistically significant, based on a 95 percent level of confidence. For more information see *The Arts in the United States: Developing Key National Indicators of Arts Activity* technical report.

<sup>3</sup> “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.

that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> For example, the number of dancers, entertainers (which includes clowns, comedians, and magicians, among other occupations), and musicians decreased between 2019 and 2021. It is reasonable to assume that the loss

of live performances during the COVID-19 shutdowns played a role in declines among these occupations. However, between 2021 and 2022, the numbers of dancers increased (from 18,000 to 27,000) as did the number of musicians (from 206,000 to 231,000). The

**Figure A1-1. Number of artists in the total labor force, by artist occupation: 2010, 2019, 2021, and 2022**



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, 2021 and 2022 are included to compare artists in the labor force before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from 2010 are included for long-term trend comparisons to 2019, 2021 and 2022 data. Data from 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](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, 2021, and 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Comparisons are made between 2019, 2021, and 2022 to highlight changes that may have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic 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.

number of entertainers remained unchanged, at 43,000. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of designers increased (from 960,000 to 997,000) as did the number of fine artists (from 307,000 to 331,000).

## Diversity among artists



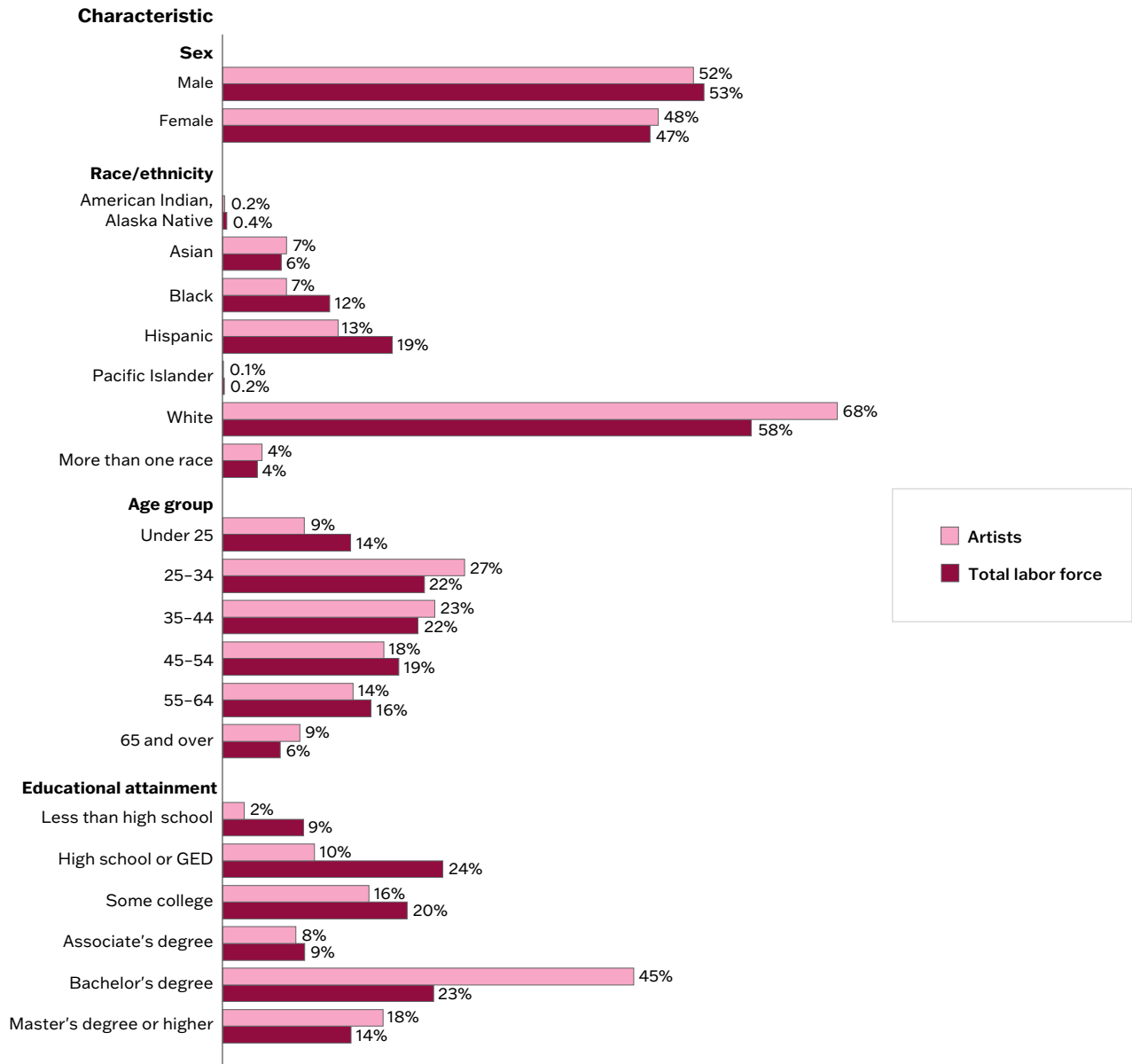
When artists in the labor force are compared with the total U.S. labor force in general, they are a comparatively less diverse population (**Figure A1-2**). Overall, in 2022, artists were more likely than the total labor force to be female, White, Asian, or of two or more races, and less likely to be male, Black, Hispanic, or American Indian/Alaska Native. For example, while the percentage of female workers among artists (48 percent) was slightly higher than for the total labor force (47 percent), the percentage of artists who were White (68 percent) was higher than for the total labor force (58 percent) and the percentages of artists who were Black (7 percent) or Hispanic (13 percent) were lower than for the total labor force (12 percent and 19 percent, respectively). There was no measurable difference between the percentage of artists who were Pacific Islander and the percentage of the total labor force who were Pacific Islander.

The distribution of artists in the labor force by age group shows a complex picture. The percentage of artists aged 65 and over in 2022 was higher (9 percent) than for the total labor force (6 percent), whereas the percentage of artists under age 25 was lower (9 percent, versus 14 percent of the total labor force). On the other hand, the percentages of artists aged 25–34 and aged 35–44 were higher than for the total labor force, and the percentages of artists aged 45–54 and aged 55–64 were lower.

In 2022, artists in the labor force generally had higher levels of education than the total labor force. Relatively fewer artists had not completed high school (2 percent), compared to the total labor force (9 percent). Also, relatively fewer artists had completed only high school (10 percent, versus 24 percent of the total labor force) or attended only some college<sup>5</sup> (16 percent versus 20 percent). In contrast, about twice as many artists had completed a bachelor's degree (45 percent) than had the share of the total labor force (23 percent). Also, 18 percent of artists had completed a master's degree or higher, compared to 14 percent of the total labor force.

<sup>5</sup> "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: 2022**



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), 2022.

## Artist occupations



In addition to key differences in the demographics of artists when compared to the total labor force, there was also significant variation among artists by occupational group.

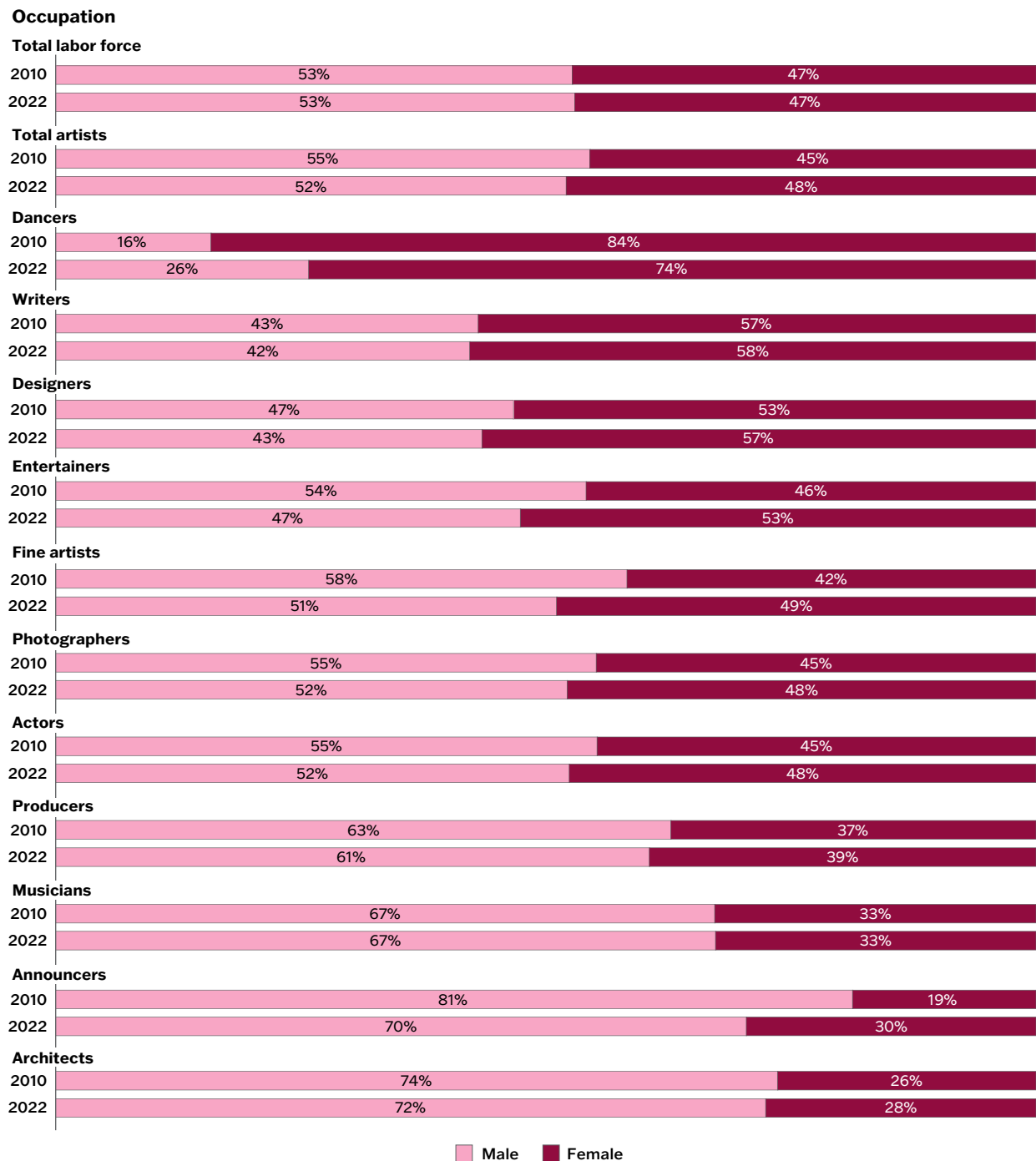
The percentage of female workers in artist occupations ranged from lows of 28 percent for architects and 30 percent for announcers to a high of 74 percent for dancers (**Figure A1-3**). The percentage of female workers among artists, overall, increased by 2 percentage points between 2010 and 2022—from 45 percent to 48 percent—whereas the percentage of female workers among the total labor force remained at 47 percent during this period. Among artist occupations, the largest increase in the percentage of female workers between 2010 and 2022 was for announcers—from 19 percent to 30 percent. In contrast, the largest decline in the percentage of females during this time period was for dancers. The share slipped from 84 percent in 2010 to 74 percent in 2022.

As noted previously, the percentage of Black and Hispanic artists was lower compared to the percentage of these groups in the total labor force (**Figure A1-4**). Overall, the percentage of Black artists (7 percent) was about 5 percentage points lower than that of the total labor force (12 percent). Black artists were least represented among architects (3 percent), designers (5 percent), and photographers (7 percent). Conversely, Black artists were most highly represented among dancers (20 percent). The percentage of Hispanic artists (13 percent) was about 6 percentage points lower than

that of the total labor force (19 percent). Hispanic artists were least represented among writers (9 percent), architects (10 percent), musicians (11 percent), and producers (11 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 (11 percent and 9 percent, respectively), but, within other occupations, the percentage of Asian artists was lower than or not measurably different from that of the total labor force.

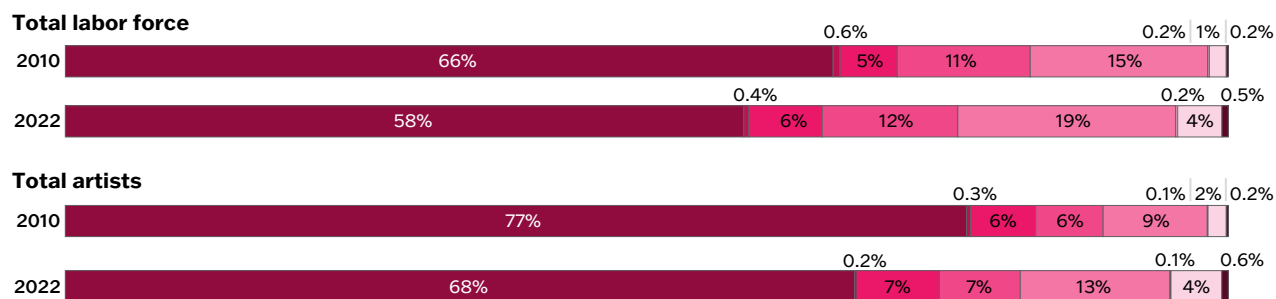
There were modest increases in the racial/ethnic diversity of artists in the labor force between 2010 and 2022. The share of architects who were Black increased from 2 percent in 2010 to 3 percent in 2022; the percentage of Black designers, from 4 percent to 5 percent; the percentage of Black fine artists, from 3 percent to 6 percent; and the percentage of Black writers, from 5 percent to 8 percent. The percentage of Hispanic artists increased overall, and in the majority of the specific artist occupations. For example, the percentage of Hispanic actors grew from 9 percent in 2010 to 14 percent in 2022, while the percentage of entertainers who were Hispanic grew from 11 percent to 17 percent. The percentage of Asian artists increased overall, from 6 percent in 2010 to 7 percent in 2022, and there was also growth in the percentages of Asian actors (2 percent to 5 percent) and designers (7 percent to 9 percent). During this period, the overall percentage of artists who were of more than one race grew from 2 percent to 4 percent.

**Figure A1-3. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and sex: 2010 and 2022**



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 2022.

**Figure A1-4. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2022**



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% !	‡
	2022	46.7%	‡	3.5%	19.9%	22.4%	‡	7.5% !	‡
Entertainers	2010	72.8%	‡	3.6%	9.5%	10.8%	‡	2.5% !	‡
	2022	58.0%	‡	4.6%	11.4%	17.2%	‡	7.5%	‡
Actors	2010	72.9%	‡	2.0% !	11.2%	8.7%	‡	4.0%	‡
	2022	61.5%	‡	4.9%	14.4%	14.5%	‡	4.0%	0.6% !
Announcers	2010	70.5%	‡	3.2%	10.3%	13.8%	‡	1.5% !	‡
	2022	63.0%	‡	2.9%	12.2%	17.1%	‡	3.6%	‡
Musicians	2010	72.9%	‡	4.0%	13.0%	8.1%	‡	1.5%	‡
	2022	66.4%	0.3% !	3.9%	11.8%	11.0%	‡	5.4%	1.0%
Photographers	2010	78.5%	‡	3.6%	6.3%	10.1%	‡	1.2%	‡
	2022	67.6%	‡	5.1%	6.8%	14.5%	‡	5.3%	0.4% !
Fine artists	2010	79.5%	1.1%	5.7%	3.4%	8.8%	‡	1.3%	‡
	2022	67.6%	0.4%	6.8%	6.1%	13.1%	‡	4.9%	0.6%
Designers	2010	77.4%	0.2%	6.8%	4.1%	9.9%	‡	1.4%	0.2% !
	2022	67.2%	0.2%	8.9%	5.1%	14.2%	0.0% !	3.8%	0.4%
Producers	2010	75.9%	‡	4.2%	7.1%	10.4%	‡	1.9%	‡
	2022	69.2%	‡	4.4%	9.0%	11.1%	‡	4.9%	1.3%
Architects	2010	80.4%	‡	9.6%	1.7%	7.3%	‡	0.8%	‡
	2022	72.0%	‡	11.3%	3.0%	10.3%	‡	2.8%	0.4% !
Writers	2010	84.8%	0.6% !	3.8%	5.2%	3.6%	‡	1.7%	0.2% !
	2022	73.4%	0.3% !	5.1%	7.6%	8.6%	‡	4.6%	0.3% !

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

‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the CV is 50 percent or greater.

NOTE: AI/AN = American Indian, Alaska Native. 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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and suppression of estimates not meeting statistical standards.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2022.

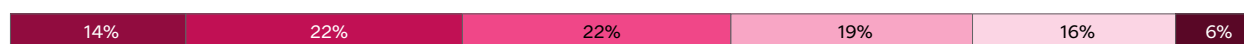


Compared to the total labor force in 2022, there was a general pattern of fewer artists in the youngest age group of workers, and more artists in the oldest age group. However, this pattern varied by artist occupation (Figure A1-5). Given that some occupations typically require college degrees, it is unsurprising that there were relatively few artists under age 25 in such fields as architecture (4 percent). Also, the percentages of fine artists and writers under age 25 were relatively low (7 percent for both occupations). In contrast, the percentage of dancers under age 25 (34 percent) was much greater than the percentage of the total labor force in this age group (14 percent). The share of workers aged 25–34 was larger for most artist occupations than for the overall labor force (22 percent). For

example, the percentages of dancers (42 percent), entertainers (33 percent), photographers (31 percent), producers (28 percent), actors (27 percent), designers (28 percent), fine artists (29 percent), and writers (26 percent) aged 25–34 were higher than the percentage of this age group in the total labor force. The percentages of workers aged 65 and over who were musicians (19 percent), architects (11 percent), writers (12 percent), actors (10 percent), and fine artists (9 percent) were greater than the percentage of U.S. workers aged 65 and over (6 percent). Conversely, the percentages of producers (5 percent), photographers (5 percent), and dancers (3 percent) aged at least 65 were lower than the corresponding share of older adults in the total labor force.

**Figure A1-5. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and age group: 2022**

**Total labor force**



**Total artists**



Occupation	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Architects	3.7%	20.0%	25.5%	20.9%	18.9%	11.0%
Producers	9.7%	28.1%	25.6%	19.8%	12.2%	4.5%
Fine artists	7.5%	28.7%	23.8%	16.9%	13.8%	9.3%
Writers	7.3%	26.1%	24.0%	16.5%	13.8%	12.3%
Designers	8.9%	27.8%	23.4%	19.3%	14.5%	6.1%
Musicians	9.8%	22.1%	18.9%	13.4%	16.8%	18.9%
Actors	10.8%	26.7%	22.6%	16.7%	13.3%	9.9%
Photographers	13.0%	30.8%	25.3%	14.7%	11.2%	5.0%
Announcers	11.8%	22.1%	22.2%	20.7%	16.2%	7.0%
Entertainers	17.5%	32.8%	19.5%	11.1%	11.7%	7.5%
Dancers	33.6%	41.9%	14.1%	3.9% !	3.6% !	2.9% !

! 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), 2022.

In 2022, as previously noted, artists in the labor force tended to have more education than the total labor force. However, a deeper look at the percentages by artist occupation shows some exceptions 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 (7 percent) and entertainers (6 percent). The percentage of artists in most occupations who had only completed high school (ranging from 2 percent for architects to 16 percent for fine artists) was lower than that of the total labor force (24 percent). There was no measurable difference for dancers (32 percent) and entertainers (23 percent). The percentage of artists in most occupations who had obtained a bachelor's degree (ranging from

31 percent for musicians to 58 percent for producers) was higher than that of the total labor force (23 percent), though the percentage for dancers (23 percent) and entertainers (28 percent) were not measurably different. Compared to the total labor force, a larger percentage of artists had a master's degree or higher (18 percent of artists, compared to 14 percent of all workers), but the pattern was inconsistent across artist occupations. Architects (43 percent), writers (31 percent), musicians (24 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 (9 percent), entertainers (8 percent), and dancers (5 percent) were less likely to have a master's degree or higher. 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 educational attainment: 2022**

**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
Dancers	6.8%	31.9%	30.7%	1.8% !	23.3%	5.5% !
Entertainers	5.8%	23.1%	28.8%	6.2%	28.2%	7.9%
Photographers	2.2%	14.2%	23.5%	12.5%	38.7%	8.9%
Designers	2.4%	9.6%	16.4%	11.7%	48.6%	11.2%
Announcers	2.2% !	15.4%	22.1%	5.8%	41.9%	12.5%
Actors	4.7%	12.0%	17.6%	6.1%	47.7%	11.9%
Fine artists	3.5%	16.3%	19.2%	7.9%	40.2%	13.0%
Producers	1.2%	5.9%	13.2%	4.9%	57.8%	17.0%
Musicians	3.8%	13.7%	22.0%	5.5%	31.4%	23.7%
Writers	1.3%	4.5%	9.1%	3.4%	51.1%	30.6%
Architects	0.6%	1.8%	5.4%	3.6%	46.0%	42.7%

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

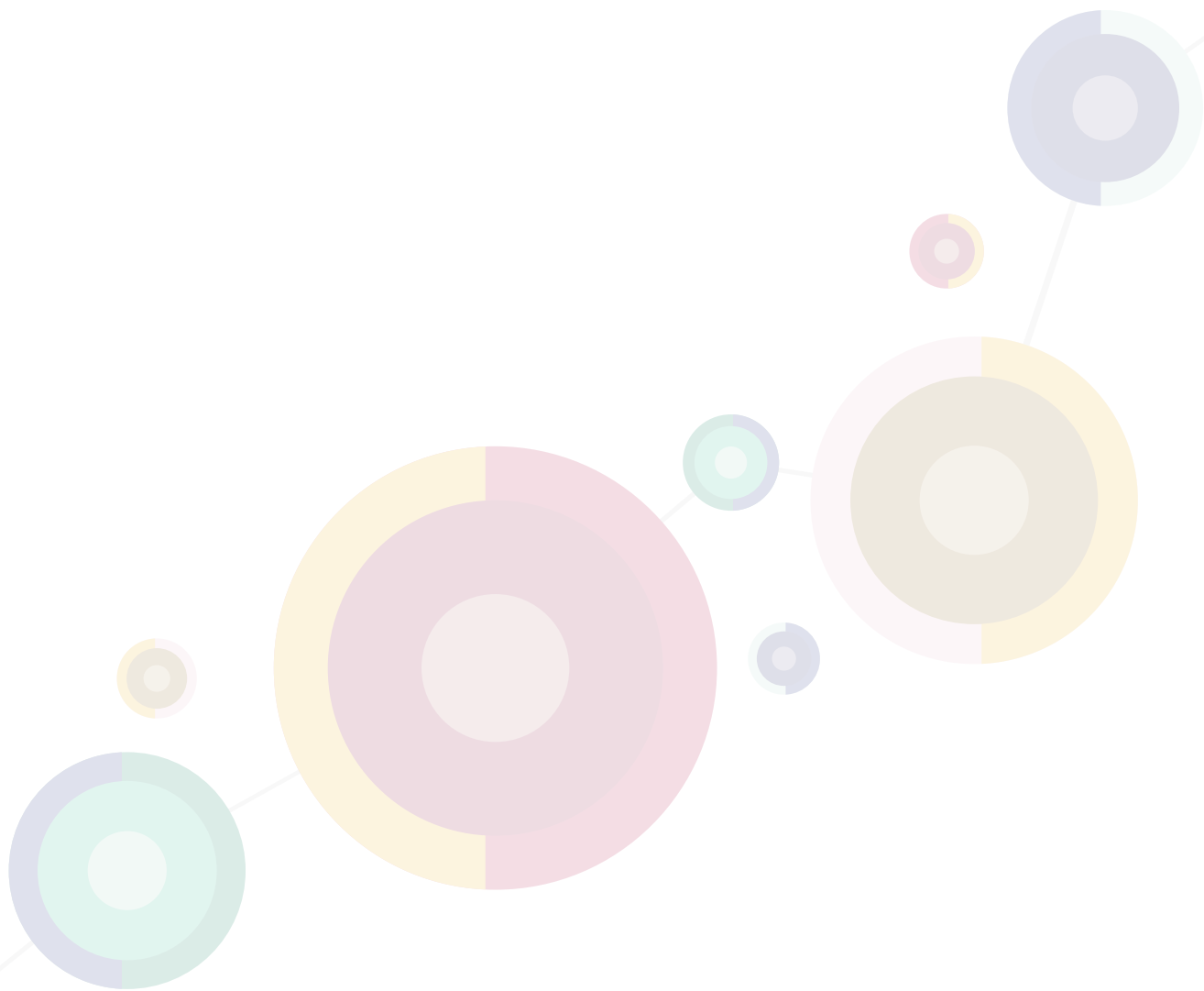
NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. "Architects" 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. "Some college" includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2022.

## Other differences



- Artists in the labor force were less likely to live without a spouse or partner in 2022, compared to the total labor force (41 percent of artists versus 44 percent of all workers).
- Artists in the labor force were slightly more likely than the total labor force to live with either an opposite-sex spouse or partner (56 percent versus 55 percent) or same-sex spouse or partner (2 percent versus 1 percent).
- Artists in the labor force were less likely than the total labor force to be veterans in 2022 (3 percent versus 5 percent).



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