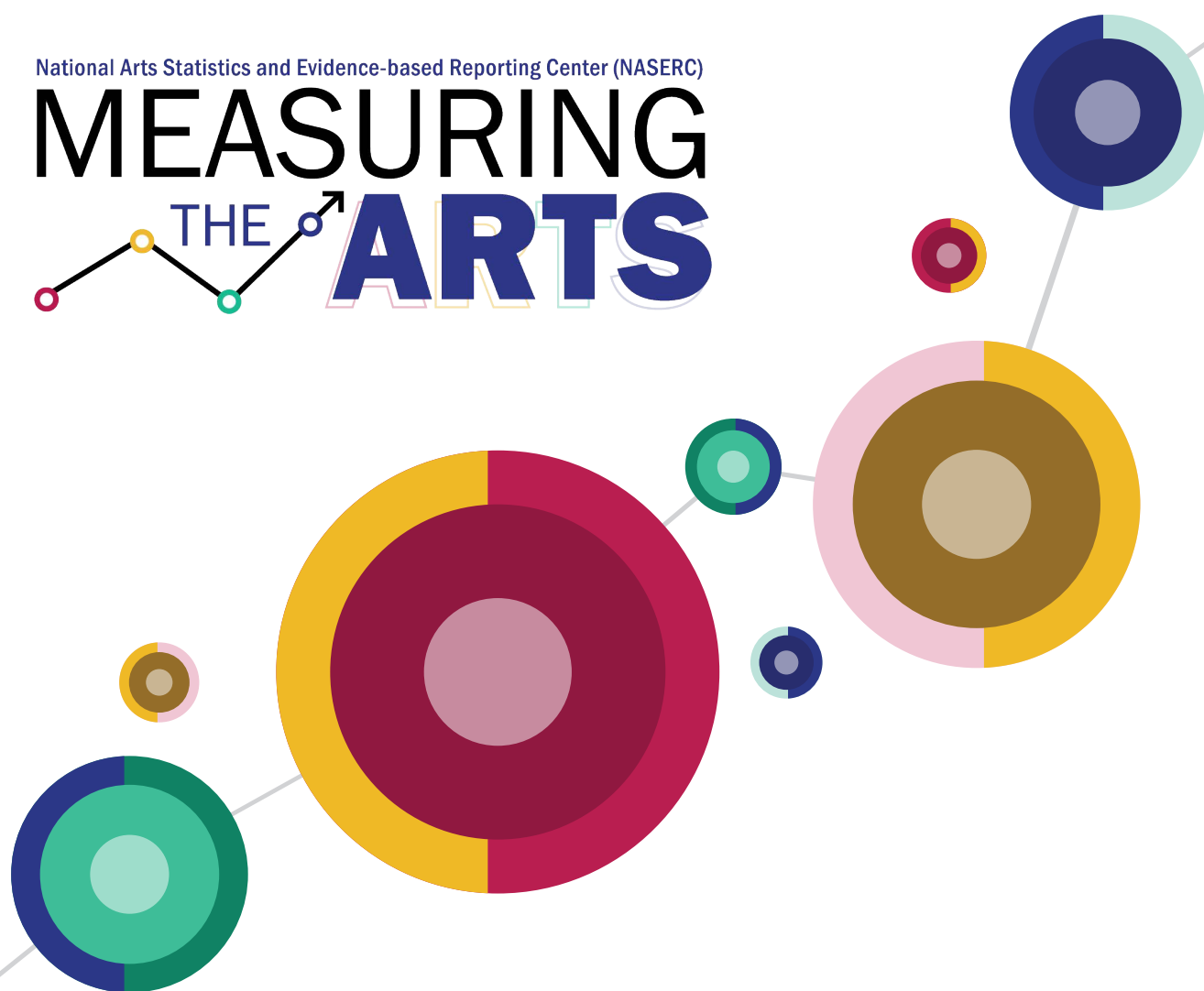


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

MEASURING THE ARTS



Domain A

Artists and Other Cultural Workers



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

Key Findings

- In 2023, there were approximately 2.8 million artists in the total U.S. labor force, a 36 percent increase from 2010.
- The number of artists in 2023 met or exceeded 2010 levels across all occupations. Notable growth was seen among fine artists, art directors, and animators; producers and directors; architects; announcers; and photographers.
- Artists made up 1.6 percent of the total labor force in 2023 and were more likely to be female compared to the total labor force.
- The share of Hispanic artists increased in 2023 compared to 2010 across most occupations, while the share of White artists declined.
- In 2023, artists in the labor force were generally more educated but less racially and ethnically varied than the total labor force.

Introduction

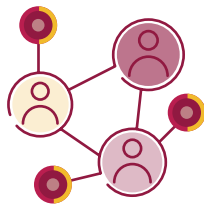
Artists in the United States represent a varied group of talented individuals who share a passion for expressing themselves through art and design. Artistry and design constitute key elements of our social fabric and contribute substantially to the country's total economic activity. Indicator A.1 explores the characteristics of artists in the U.S. labor force. In this and other indicators in the series, artists are defined by their self-reported primary occupation.¹ For more information on this definition, see *Artist definition*.

Individuals whose occupations are not covered under the artist definition but who are employed

Artist definition

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has developed a list of 11 specific artist occupations: architects (including landscape architects); fine artists, art directors, and animators; designers; actors; producers and directors; dancers and choreographers; musicians (including music directors and composers); entertainers; announcers; writers and authors; and photographers. These occupations have been used in this indicator, though some categories have been combined for reporting purposes.

For more information, see the 2019 NEA publication [Artists and Other Cultural Workers: A Statistical Portrait](#).



in cultural occupations that support the arts are described 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, are described in **Indicator A.5: What is the Labor Market Status of Artists and Other Cultural Workers?** The work classification of artists and the industries they are most often employed in is described in **Indicator C.3: How Many Artists and Other Cultural Workers are Employed in Arts Organizations and Businesses?**

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 for this indicator—asks only about the occupation corresponding to 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/2023/ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf.

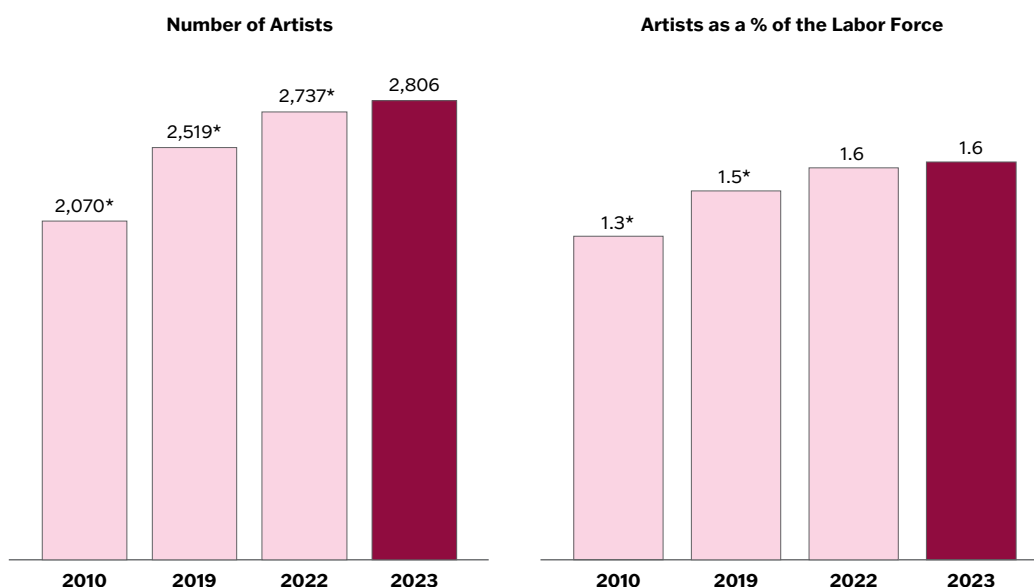
Types of artists



In 2023, there were approximately 2.8 million artists in the total U.S. labor force (**Figure A1-1**). This represents a 3 percent increase from 2022, when

there were 2.7 million artists in the labor force, and an overall increase of 36 percent since 2010, when there were 2.1 million artists in the labor force.² The share of artists in the total workforce in 2023 remained steady from the previous year at 1.6 percent but has increased by 0.3 percentage points from 2010 (1.3 percent).

Figure A1-1. Number of artists in the total labor force and artists as a percentage of the total labor force: 2010, 2019, 2022, and 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2023.

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, 2022, and 2023 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, 2022, and 2023 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.

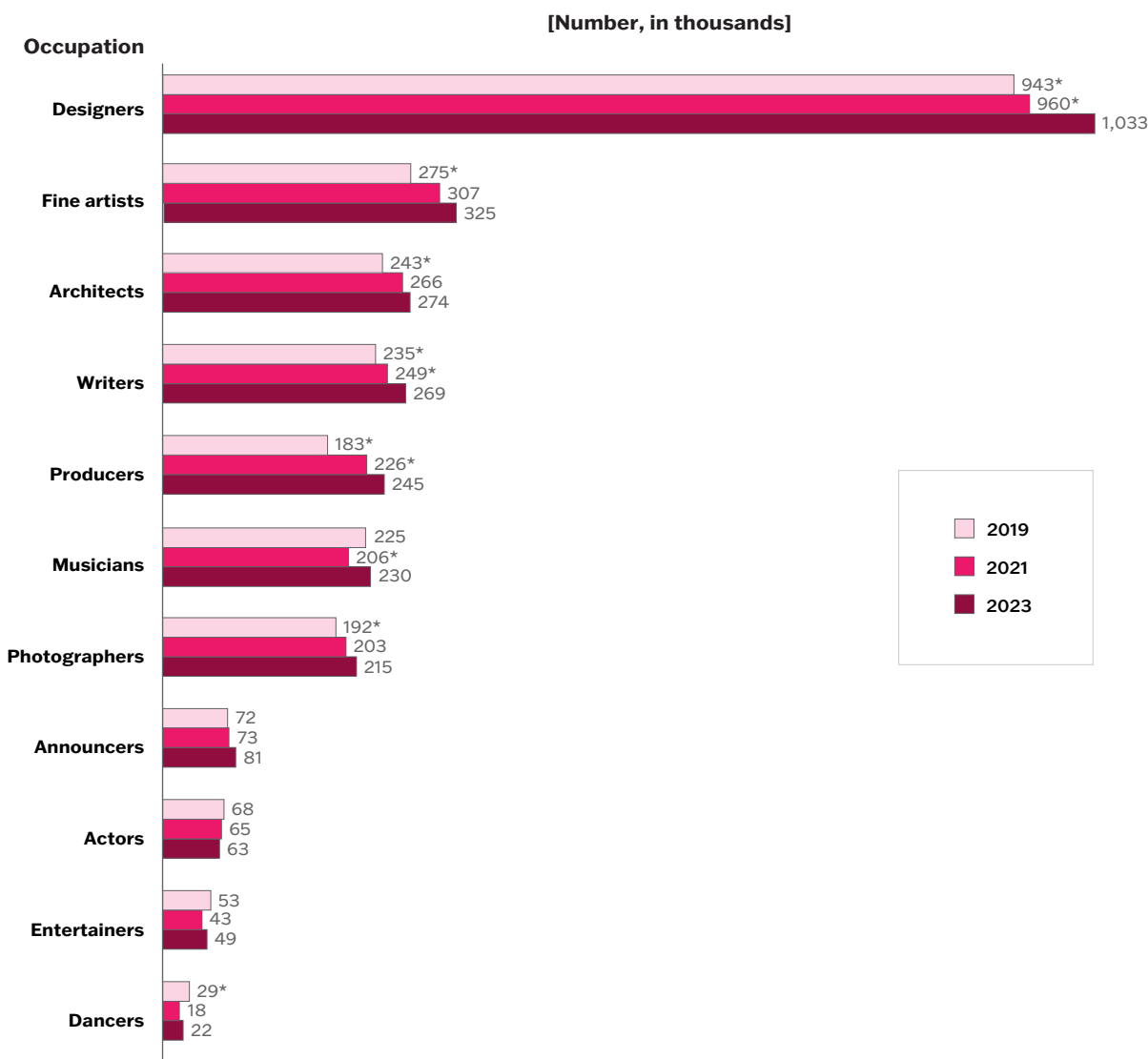
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010, 2019, 2022, and 2023.

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* technical report.

Among the 2.8 million artists in the labor force in 2023, the artist occupations³ with the highest number of artists were designers (1,033,000), fine artists (325,000), architects (274,000), writers (269,000), producers (245,000), musicians (230,000), and

photographers (215,000; **Figure A1-2**). The number of artists across all occupations in 2023 either exceeded or was not measurably different from the number of artists reported in 2010.

Figure A1-2. Number of artists in the total labor force, by artist occupation: 2019, 2021, and 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2023.

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 2023 are included to compare artists in the labor force before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. 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. "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), 2019, 2021, and 2023.

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.

As with many occupations, the number of artists reported in 2023 suggests a continuing rebound from the dramatic decreases that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, but this varied by artist occupation.⁴ 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 2023, the number of musicians increased from 206,000 to 230,000. In contrast, the number of dancers and entertainers in 2023 was not measurably different from 2021 levels. The number of designers also increased during this period (from 960,000 to 1,033,000), as did the number of producers (from 226,000 to 245,000) and the number of writers (from 249,000 to 269,000).

Demographic characteristics of artists

When compared with the total U.S. labor force, artists in the labor force are a comparatively less varied population (**Figure A1-3**). Overall, in 2023, artists were more likely than the total labor force to be female, White, or of more than one race, and less likely to be male, Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Pacific Islander. For example, the percentage of female workers among artists (50 percent) was slightly higher than in the total labor force (47 percent). Additionally, the percentage of artists who were White (68 percent) was higher than in the total labor force (58 percent). The percentages of artists who were Black (7 percent) or Hispanic (13 percent) were lower than in the total labor force (12 percent and 19 percent, respectively). There was no measurable difference between the percentage of artists who were Asian and the percentage of the total labor force who were Asian.

The age distribution of artists in the labor force shows a complex picture. The percentage of artists aged 65 and over in 2023 was higher (9 percent) than in the total labor force (7 percent), whereas the percentage of artists under age 25 was lower (9 percent, versus

14 percent in the total labor force). Additionally, the percentages of artists aged 25–34 and aged 35–44 were higher than in the total labor force, while the percentages of artists aged 45–54 and aged 55–64 were lower.

In 2023, 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). Similarly, relatively fewer artists had completed only high school (10 percent, versus 24 percent of the total labor force) or attended only some college⁵ (16 percent versus 20 percent). In contrast, about twice as many artists had completed a bachelor's degree as their highest level of attainment (46 percent) compared to the total labor force (23 percent). Additionally, 18 percent of artists had completed a master's degree or higher, compared to 15 percent of the total labor force.

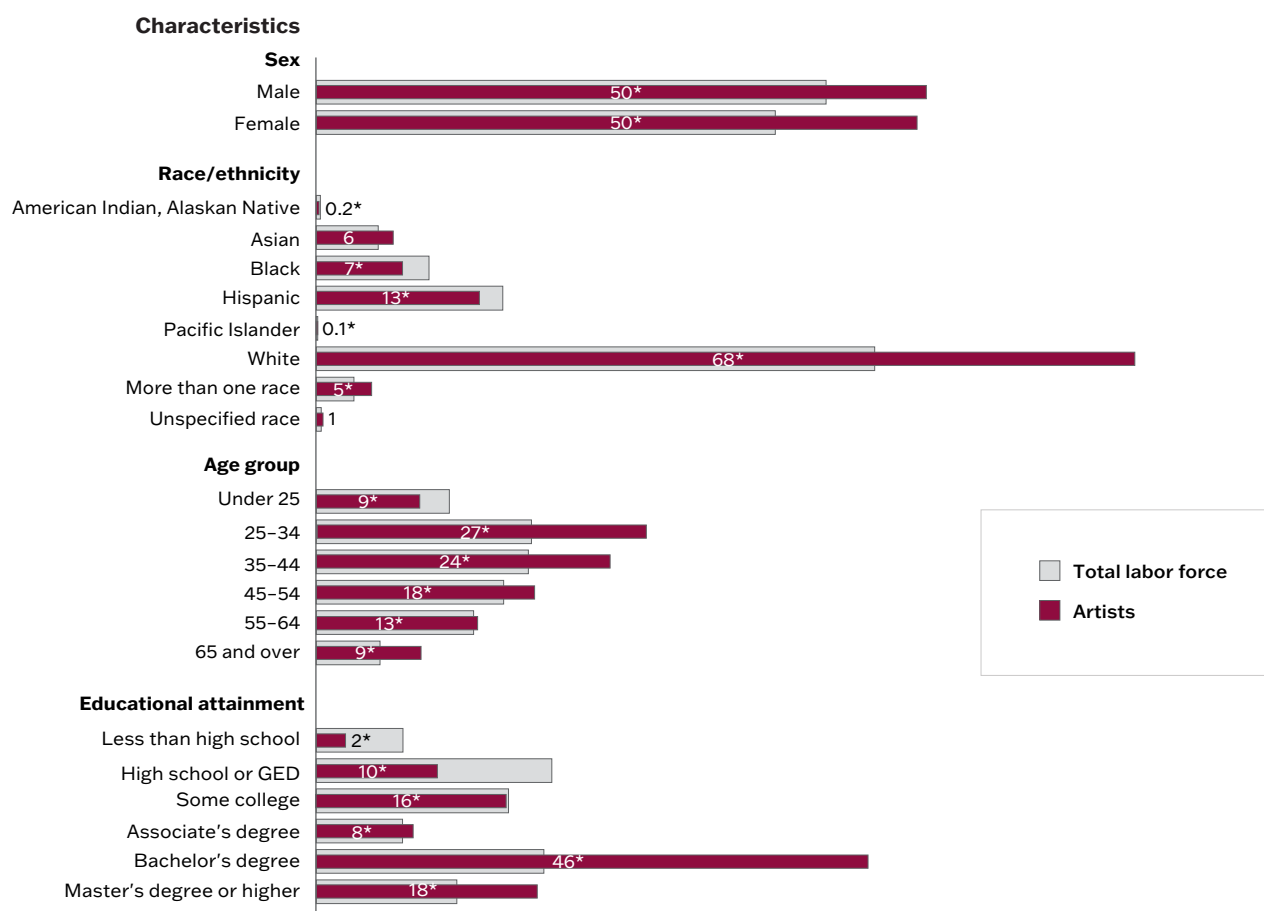
Demographics and trends in artist occupations

In addition to key differences in the demographics of artists compared to the total labor force, there was also significant variation among artists by occupation. The percentage of female workers in artist occupations ranged from lows of 29 percent for architects and 32 percent for musicians to a high of 70 percent for dancers (**Figure A1-4**). The percentage of female workers among artists overall increased by 4 percentage points between 2010 and 2023—from 45 percent to 50 percent—whereas the percentage of female workers in 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 2023 was for announcers—from 19 percent to 38 percent. In contrast, the largest decline in the percentage of female workers during this time period was for dancers, with the share slipping from 84 percent in 2010 to 70 percent in 2023.

⁴ Comparisons are made between 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023 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.

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

Figure A1-3. Percentage distribution of artists and the total labor force, by sex, race/ethnicity, age group, and educational attainment: 2023

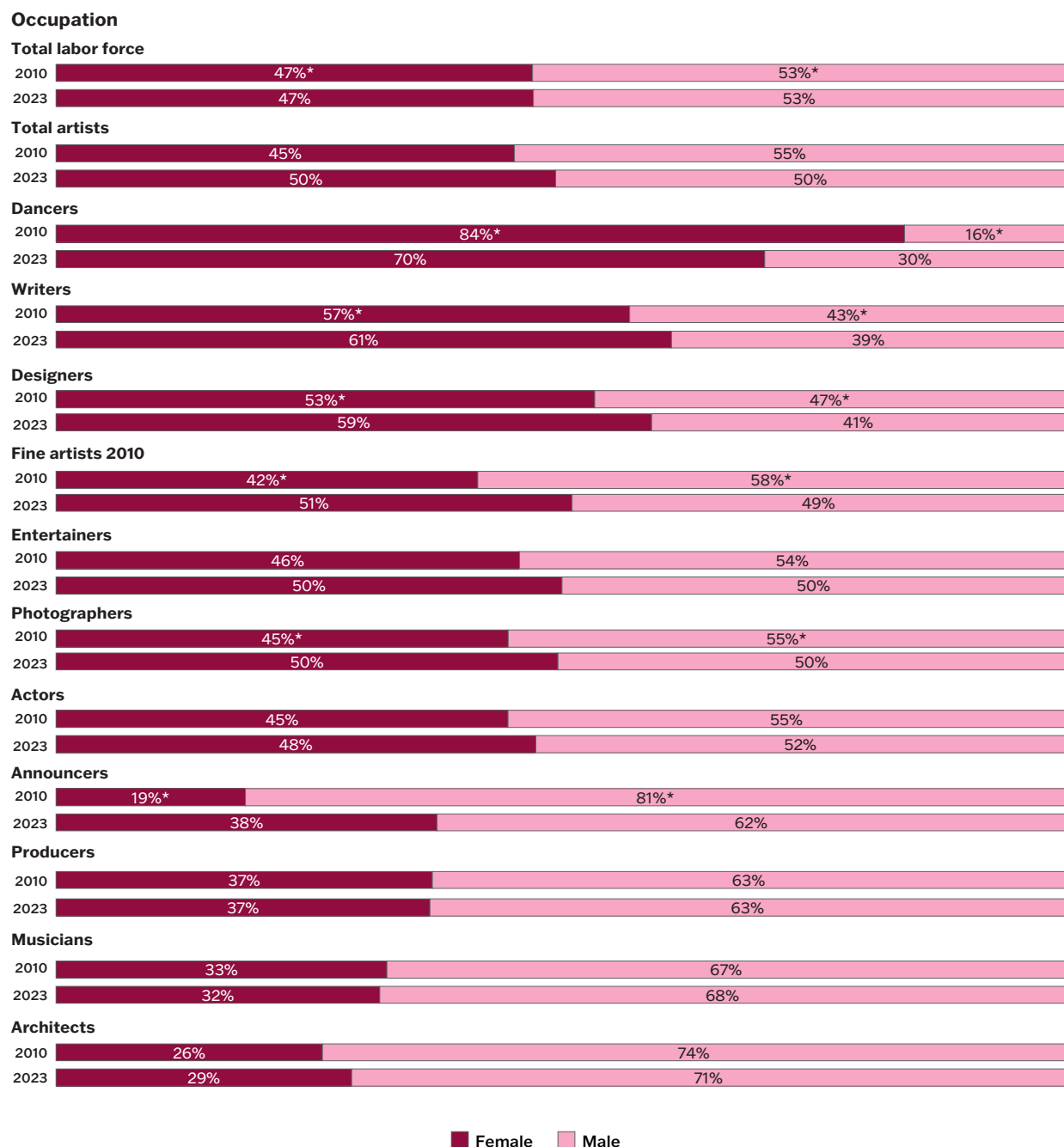


* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from the total labor force.

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), 2023.

Figure A1-4. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by artist occupation and sex: 2010 and 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2023.

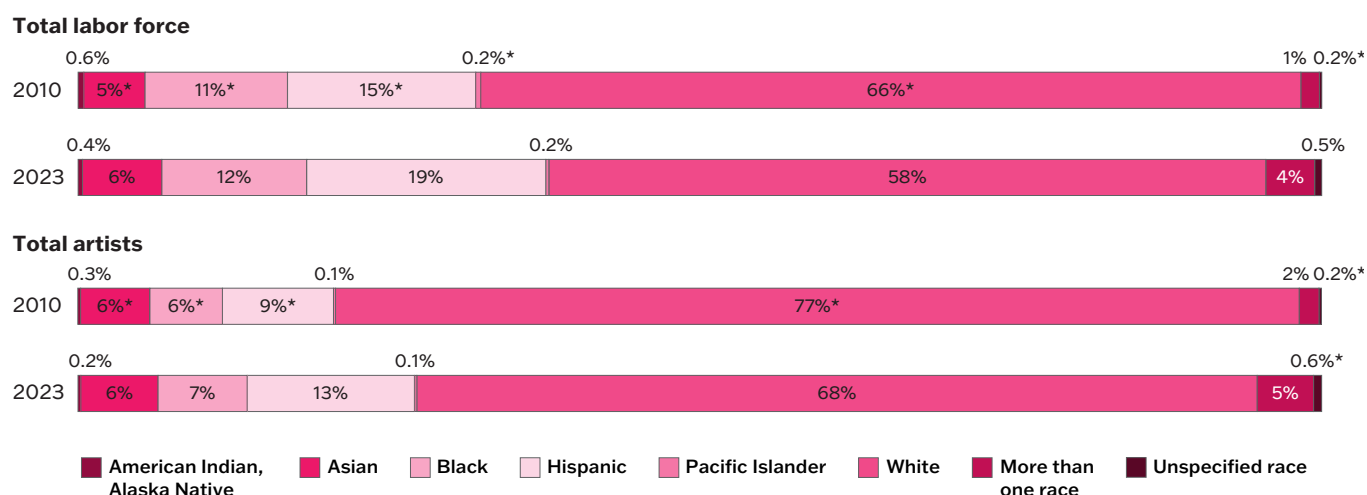
NOTE: Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. "Architects" 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 2023.

There were modest increases in the variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds among artists in the labor force between 2010 and 2023 (**Figure A1-5**). The share of architects who were Black increased from 2 percent in 2010 to 4 percent in 2023; the percentage of Black designers, from 4 percent to 6 percent; the percentage of Black fine artists, from 3 percent to 5 percent; and the percentage of Black photographers, from 6 percent to 9 percent (see **Table A1-3**). The percentage of Hispanic artists increased overall, and in the majority of the artist occupations. For example,

the percentage of Hispanic actors grew from 9 percent in 2010 to 15 percent in 2023, while the percentage of Hispanic fine artists grew from 9 percent to 16 percent. The percentage of Asian artists increased by about one percentage point overall, from less than 6 percent in 2010 to over 6 percent in 2023, and there was also growth in the percentages of Asian actors (2 percent to 5 percent) and designers (7 percent to 8 percent). During this period, the overall percentage of artists who were of more than one race grew from 2 percent to 5 percent.

Figure A1-5. Percentage distribution of the total labor force and artists, by race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2023.

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. Race groups are mutually exclusive; persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2023.

Compared to the total labor force in 2023, there was a general pattern of fewer artists in the youngest age group of workers, and more artists in the oldest age group (**Figure A1-3**). However, this pattern varied by artist occupation (see **Table A1-3**). Occupations that typically require college degrees had a relatively small percentage of artists under age 25, such as architecture (3 percent). Also, the percentages of producers and fine artists under age 25 were relatively low (5 percent and 7 percent, respectively). In contrast, the percentage of dancers under age 25 (30 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 (44 percent), entertainers (37 percent), photographers (32 percent), producers (32 percent), fine artists (30 percent), and designers (28 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 (21 percent), architects (13 percent), actors (12 percent), writers (10 percent), and fine artists (9 percent) were greater than the percentage of the total labor force aged 65 and over (7 percent). Conversely, the percentage of producers (4 percent) aged at least 65 was lower than the corresponding share of older adults in the total labor force.

In 2023, as previously noted, artists in the labor force tended to have more education than the total labor force (**Figure A1-3**). However, a deeper look at the percentages by artist occupation shows some exceptions to the overall trend (see **Table A1-3**). The percentage of artists in most occupations who had only completed high school (ranging from 2 percent for architects to 16 percent for announcers) was lower than that of the total labor force (24 percent). There was no measurable difference for dancers (34 percent) and entertainers (22 percent). The percentage of artists in most occupations who had obtained a bachelor's degree as their highest level of attainment (ranging from 31 percent for entertainers to 56 percent for producers) was higher than that of the total labor force (23 percent), though the percentage for dancers (23 percent) was 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 15 percent of all workers), but the pattern was inconsistent across artist occupations. Architects (44 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 (15 percent); designers (12 percent), announcers (11 percent), photographers (9 percent), entertainers (8 percent), and dancers (4 percent) were less likely to have a master's degree or higher.

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