

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

MEASURING THE ARTS

An abstract graphic featuring several concentric circles and lines in various colors (blue, green, yellow, pink, brown) arranged in a network-like pattern. A line starts from the bottom left, goes up to a small circle, then down to another, then up to a third, and finally up to a larger circle at the top right. Other circles are connected to these by lines, creating a complex web of shapes.

Domain A

Artists and Other Cultural Workers



Indicator A.4: **What Do Artists and Other Cultural Workers Study as Undergraduates?**

Introduction



Not all people who major in the arts as undergraduates work as artists or other cultural workers. Similarly, not all artists and other (i.e., non-artist) cultural workers major in the arts as undergraduates. Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) allow researchers to explore the correspondence between individuals' bachelor's degree major field of study¹ and their occupation type. This information helps policymakers, arts administrators, and aspiring artists know more about the occupational prospects associated with getting an undergraduate degree in the visual or performing arts. Indicator A.4 presents the fields of study that artists and other cultural workers majored in for their undergraduate degrees—defined here as bachelor's degrees. The fields of study include not only those found in the ACS-defined “visual and performing arts” category but also other fields such as business, communication, education, and the liberal arts. Indicator A.4 also presents the occupations held by bachelor's degree recipients in visual and performing arts fields. It is important to note that the ACS visual and performing arts field of study does not capture all fields related to artist occupations, such as architecture. For more information on bachelor's degree fields of study in the ACS, including the detailed fields included in the visual and performing arts, see *Bachelor's degree fields of study in the American Community Survey*. In data for Indicator A.4 and other indicators in this series, artists and other cultural workers have been defined by their self-reported primary occupation.²

For more information on the overall educational attainment of artists and other cultural workers, see **Indicator A.1: Who Are the Artists?** and

Indicator A.2: Who Are the Other Cultural Workers? Another indicator in this series—

Indicator D.1: Who Majors in the Arts?—looks at the number and percentage of postsecondary degrees awarded in arts and cultural fields of study, which include the visual and performing arts as well as other arts-related fields of study, based on data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Bachelor's degree fields of study in the American Community Survey



The ACS asks questions about the highest level of education a person has completed and, for people reporting attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher, the major field of study for their bachelor's degree. The question about field of study is asked only of respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher. While respondents may list more than one field of study, Indicator A.4 data pertain to the first major reported. The ACS does not ask for the field of study for any other type of degree earned (such as a master's or doctorate). If an individual has an advanced degree (i.e., master's degree or higher), it is not possible to know the respondent's field of study for that degree. In the ACS, detailed visual and performing arts fields of study include the fine arts; drama and theater arts; music; commercial art and graphic design; film, video, and the photographic arts; art history and criticism; studio arts; miscellaneous fine arts; and other visual and performing arts. The fine arts and miscellaneous fine arts have been combined in Indicator A.4 for reporting purposes. For more information, see https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2022_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf.

¹ “Bachelor's degree field of study” refers to the specialized area of study (i.e., major field of study) in which a bachelor's degree was awarded. It does not refer to the type of bachelor's degree (i.e., bachelor's of science [B.S.] or bachelor's of arts [B.A.]).

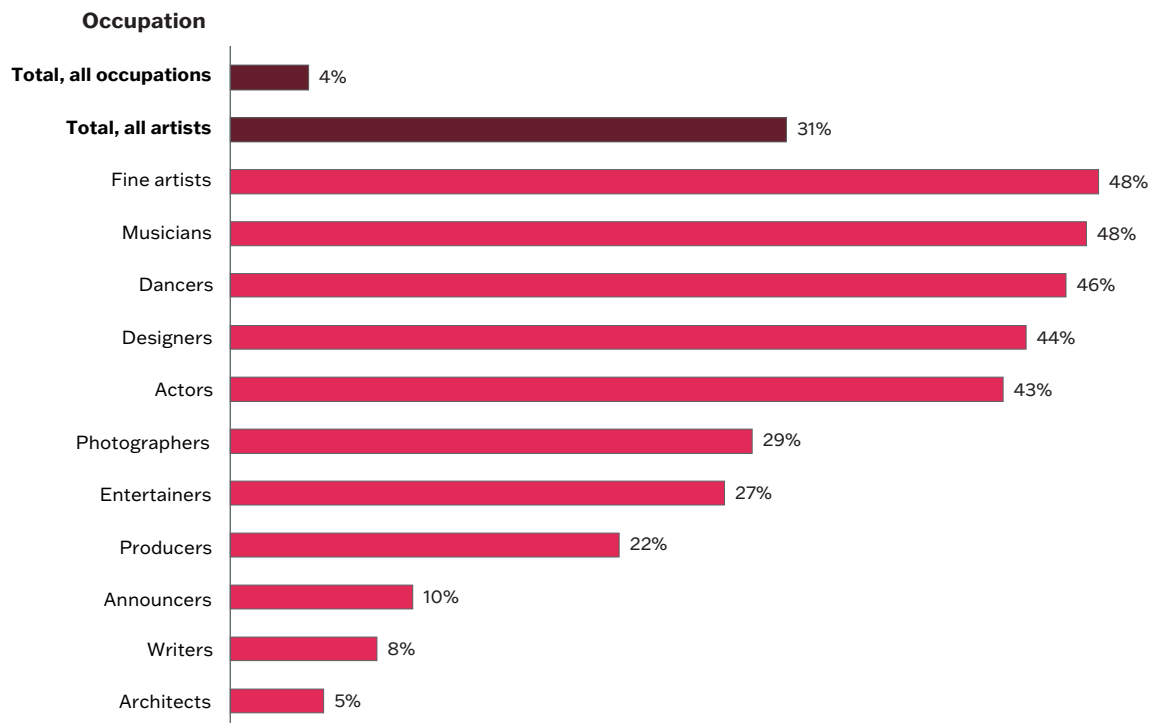
² “Primary occupation” refers to the kind of work a person does for pay most of the time. The ACS—the data source on which this indicator is based—asks only about the occupation corresponding with a respondent's current or most recent job or, if they have two or more jobs, the job with the most usual hours worked. For more information see https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2022_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf.

Artists with bachelor's degrees, by field of study

In 2022, 31 percent of artists³ who had completed a bachelor's degree majored in a visual or performing arts field of study (**Figure A4-1**). Comparatively, about 61 percent of those who majored in health professions were employed in healthcare practitioner and technical occupations and 41 percent of those who majored in computer and information sciences, mathematics, and statistics were employed in computer and mathematics occupations (see **Table A4-3**). Across all occupations, 4 percent of the workforce held a bachelor's degree in the visual and performing arts.

The percentage of bachelor's degree-holders in the visual and performing arts varied by artist occupation.⁴ While 31 percent of artists with a bachelor's degree had majored in a visual or performing arts field of study in 2022, fine artists (48 percent), musicians (48 percent), dancers (46 percent), designers (44 percent), and actors (43 percent) all had higher rates.⁵ The rates for photographers and entertainers were not measurably different from the rate for all artists. Announcers, architects, producers, and writers were more likely to have majored in fields of study outside the visual and performing arts.

Figure A4-1. Percentage of bachelor's degree-holders in the visual and performing arts, by artist occupation: 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), 2022.

³ The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has developed a list of 13 specific artist occupations: 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 have been combined for reporting purposes. For more information see the NEA's 2022 publication *Arts Data Profile #31—Artists in the Workforce: National and State Estimates for 2015–2019*.

⁴ "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.

⁵ Differences between estimates 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.

Within the visual and performing arts, 13 percent of artists with a bachelor's degree had majored in commercial art and graphic design; 7 percent, in the fine arts;⁶ 4 percent, in music; 3 percent, in film, video, and the photographic arts; 2 percent, in drama and theater arts; and 1 percent, in studio arts, art history and criticism, or other visual and performing arts fields (**Figure A4-2**).⁷ Outside the visual and performing arts, the largest bachelor's degree field for artists was architecture (11 percent), followed by communications (10 percent), business (9 percent), and literature and languages (6 percent). Concentrations within the visual and performing arts fields varied by artist occupation (see **Table A4-1**). For example, when looking at artists who have a bachelor's degree in a field of study likely aligned with their ultimate occupation:

- 44 percent of musicians with a bachelor's degree had majored in music, compared to 4 percent of all artists.
- 31 percent of designers with a bachelor's degree had majored in commercial art and graphic design, compared to 13 percent of all artists.
- 26 percent of actors and 11 percent of entertainers with a bachelor's degree had majored in drama and theater arts, compared to 2 percent of all artists.
- 24 percent of fine artists with a bachelor's degree had majored in the fine arts, compared to 7 percent of all artists.
- 13 percent of photographers and 10 percent of producers and directors with a bachelor's degree had majored in film, video, and the photographic arts, compared to 3 percent of all artists.

Additionally, while there is no explicit field of study for dance, 33 percent of dancers with a bachelor's degree had majored in other visual and performing arts fields, compared to 1 percent of all artists. The other visual and performing arts fields category likely includes dance majors.

As noted previously, there were also some artist occupations with significant concentrations of bachelor's degree recipients in fields outside the visual and performing arts. In most cases, these fields of study were closely aligned with the artist's chosen occupation. For example, the majority of architects with bachelor's degrees had majored in architecture (61 percent), which does not fall under the visual and performing arts but is considered an arts-related field of study. Additionally, like architects, there were other examples of artists who have a bachelor's degree in a field of study outside the visual and performing arts but aligned with their occupation:

- 34 percent of announcers, 31 percent of producers, 20 percent of writers, and 19 percent of photographers with a bachelor's degree had majored in communications, compared to 10 percent of all artists.
- 22 percent of writers with a bachelor's degree had majored in literature and languages, compared to 6 percent of all artists.

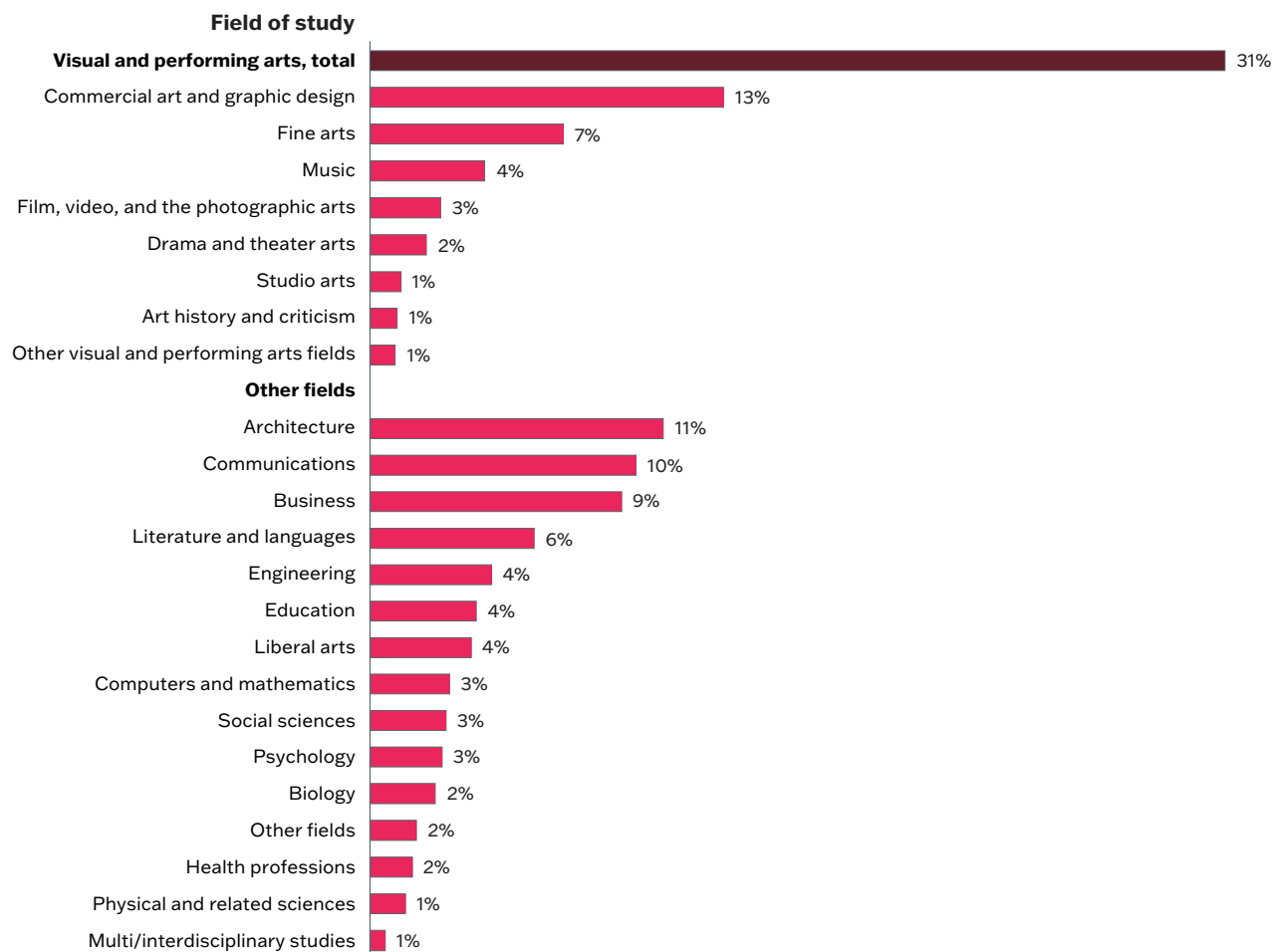
Several artist occupations also had relatively high concentrations of bachelor's degrees in fields outside the visual and performing arts. For example:

- 13 percent of musicians with a bachelor's degree had majored in education, compared to 4 percent of all artists.
- 12 percent of photographers with a bachelor's degree had majored in business, compared to 9 percent of all artists.

⁶ "Fine arts" includes the fine arts and miscellaneous fine arts.

⁷ "Other visual and performing arts fields" includes individuals who reported a bachelor's degree major aligned with the visual and performing arts but not captured in any of the detailed fields of study within this category.

Figure A4-2. Percentage distribution of artists in the labor force who hold bachelor's degrees in the visual and performing arts or other fields of study, by field of study: 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. "Biological and related sciences" includes biology, agriculture, environment, and natural resources. "Computers and mathematics" includes computer and information sciences, mathematics, and statistics. "Engineering" includes engineering and engineering technologies. "Fine arts" includes the fine arts and miscellaneous fine arts. "Liberal arts" includes liberal arts, history, and humanities. "Other visual and performing arts fields" includes individuals who reported a bachelor's degree major aligned with the visual and performing arts but not captured in any of the detailed fields of study within this category. Separate data for library science not available. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

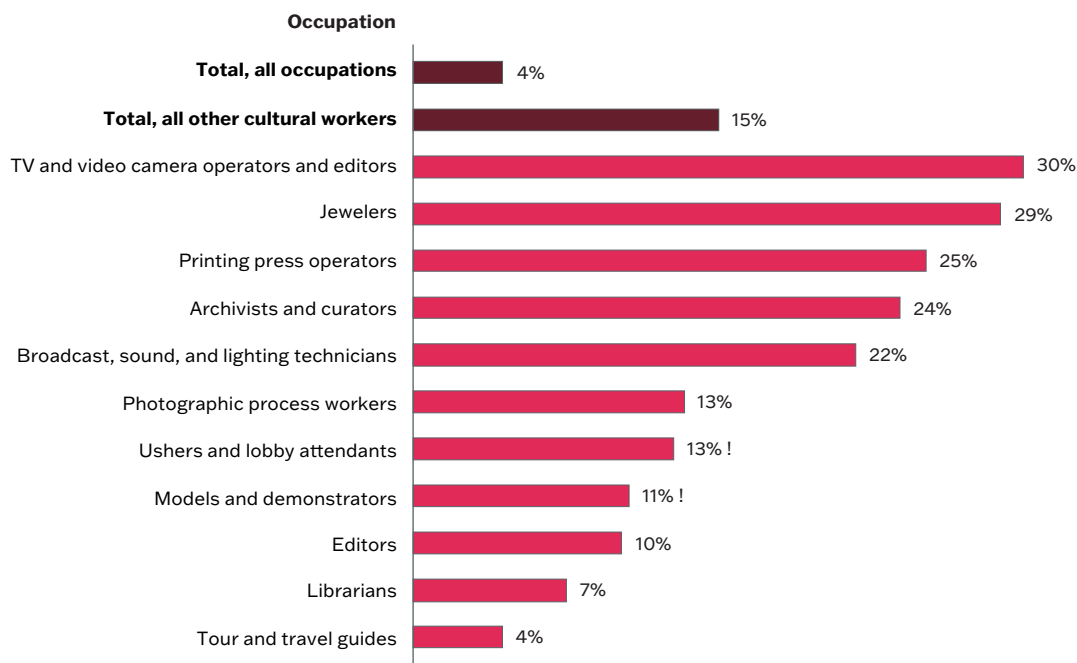
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2022.

Other cultural workers with bachelor's degrees, by field of study

In 2022, 15 percent of other (non-artist) cultural workers⁸ with a bachelor's degree reported having majored in a visual or performing arts field (**Figure A4-3**). As with artists, the percentage of bachelor's degree-holders in a visual and performing

arts field of study varied by other-cultural-worker occupation.⁹ The percentage ranged from 4 percent among tour and travel guides to 29 percent and 30 percent among jewelers and TV and video camera operators and editors. Printing press operators (25 percent); archivists and curators (24 percent); and broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians (22 percent) all had higher rates of majoring in the visual and performing arts than did cultural workers overall.

Figure A4-3. Percentage of bachelor's degree-holders in the visual and performing arts, by other cultural worker occupation: 2022



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

NOTE: Other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an other cultural worker 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 other cultural worker occupation. "Archivists and curators" include archivists, curators, and museum technicians. "Jewelers" include jewelers and precious stone and metal workers. "Librarians" include librarians and library technicians. "Models and demonstrators" include models, demonstrators, and product promoters. "Photographic process workers" include photographic process workers and processing machine operators. "TV and video camera operators and editors" include television, video, and motion picture camera operators and editors. "Ushers and lobby attendants" include ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers. Separate data for etchers and engravers and print binders and finishing workers were not available. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

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

⁸ Other cultural workers, also called non-artist cultural workers or simply cultural workers, are individuals whose primary occupation supports the arts but does not include artist-related occupations. Indicator A.4 uses 15 occupations that are included in the ACS to capture other cultural workers: archivists, curators, and museum technicians; broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians; editors; etchers and engravers; jewelers and precious stone and metal workers; librarians and library technicians; models, demonstrators, and product promoters; photographic process workers and processing machine operators; print binders and finishing workers; printing press operators; television, video, and motion picture camera operators and editors; tour and travel guides; and ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers. These occupations are mostly consistent with those listed in the National Endowment for the Arts 2019 report titled *Artists and Other Cultural Workers: A Statistical Portrait*. Some cultural occupations have been combined in this indicator for reporting purposes. Estimates of other cultural workers include all workers employed in these occupations, regardless of whether they are employed within an arts-related industry. However, the definition does not capture non-artists who work in arts and cultural industries.

⁹ "Archivists and curators" include archivists, curators, and museum technicians. "Jewelers" include jewelers and precious stone and metal workers.

"Librarians" include librarians and library technicians. "Models and demonstrators" include models, demonstrators, and product promoters. "Photographic process workers" include photographic process workers and processing machine operators. "Print binders" include print binders and finishing workers. "TV and video camera operators and editors" include television, video, and motion picture camera operators and editors. "Ushers and lobby attendants" include ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers.

Within the visual and performing arts, there were variations in the proportion of other cultural workers with bachelor's degrees in different majors. Other cultural workers with bachelor's degrees had majored in film, video, and the photographic arts (4 percent) and art history and criticism (2 percent) at slightly higher rates than artists as a whole (3 percent and 1 percent, respectively, for both fields of study; **Figure A4-4**). In addition to the visual and performing arts, the largest bachelor's degree fields for cultural workers were communications (14 percent), literature and languages (13 percent), and business, education, and liberal arts¹⁰ (all 9 percent each). Compared with artists, a smaller percentage of cultural workers with bachelor's degrees had majored in the visual and performing arts, concentrations varied by occupation type (see **Table A4-2**). For example, among cultural workers who have a bachelor's degree in a field of study likely aligned with their occupation:

- 19 percent of TV and video camera operators and editors with bachelor's degrees had majored in film, video, and the photographic arts, compared to 3 percent of all artists and 4 percent of all cultural workers.
- 11 percent of broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians with a bachelor's degree had majored in music, compared with 4 percent of artists and 2 percent of all cultural workers.
- 10 percent of jewelers with a bachelor's degree had majored in the fine arts, compared to 7 percent of all artists and 3 percent of all cultural workers. A further 9 percent had majored in studio arts, compared to 1 percent each of all cultural workers and all artists.
- 9 percent of archivists and curators with a bachelor's degree had majored in art history and criticism, compared to 2 percent of all cultural workers and 1 percent of artists. A further 7 percent of archivists and curators had majored in the fine arts, compared to 7 percent of all artists and 3 percent of all cultural workers.

Several cultural worker occupations also had relatively high concentrations of bachelor's degrees in fields outside the visual and performing arts. For example:

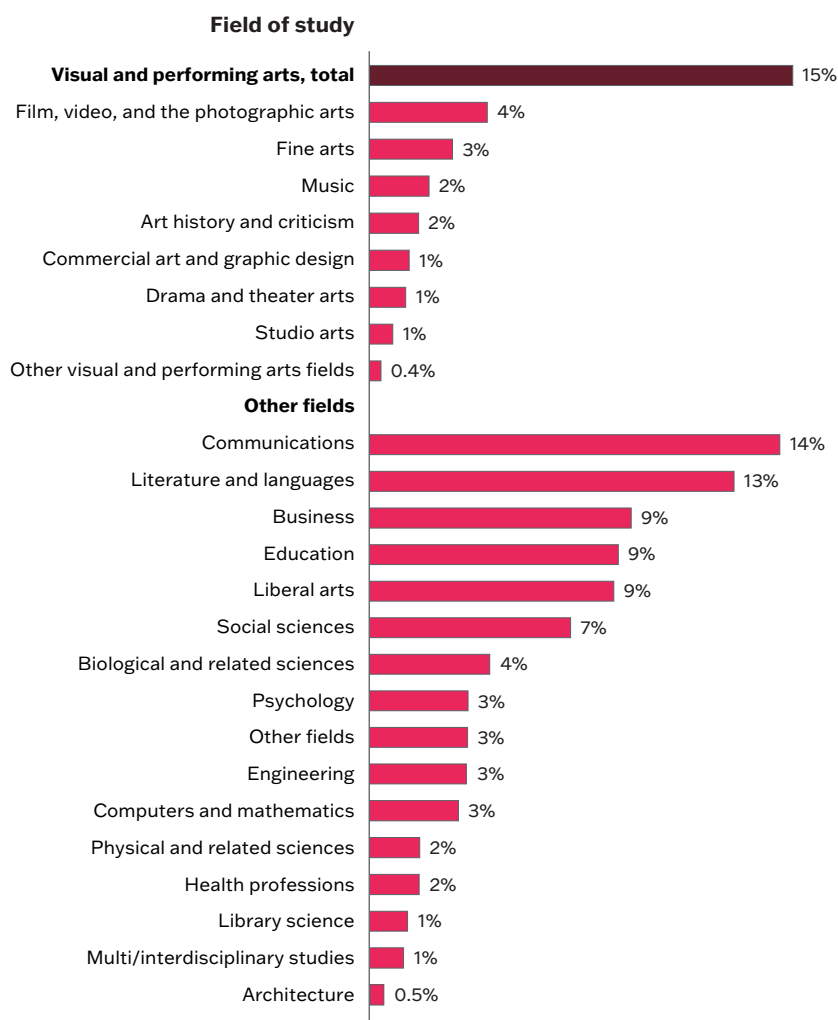
- 25 percent of editors with bachelor's degrees had majored in literature and languages, compared to 13 percent of all cultural workers and 6 percent of all artists. A further 20 percent had majored in communications, compared to 14 percent of all cultural workers and 10 percent of all artists.
- 24 percent of photographic process workers with bachelor's degrees had majored in computers and mathematics,¹¹ compared to 3 percent each of all cultural workers and all artists.
- 18 percent of librarians with a bachelor's degree had majored in literature and languages and 17 percent in education, compared to 13 percent and 9 percent of all cultural workers, and 6 percent and 4 percent of all artists. A further 4 percent of librarians had majored in library science, compared to 1 percent of all cultural workers.
- 10 percent of broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians had majored in engineering,¹² compared to 3 percent of all cultural workers and 4 percent of all artists.

¹⁰ "Liberal arts" includes liberal arts, history, and humanities.

¹¹ "Computers and mathematics" includes computer and information sciences, mathematics, and statistics.

¹² "Engineering" includes engineering and engineering technologies.

Figure A4-4. Percentage distribution of other cultural workers in the labor force who hold bachelor's degrees in the visual and performing arts or other fields of study, by field of study: 2022



NOTE: Other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an other cultural worker 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 other cultural worker occupation. "Biology" includes biology, agriculture, environment, and natural resources. "Computers and mathematics" includes computers and information sciences, mathematics, and statistics. "Engineering" includes engineering and engineering technologies. "Fine arts" includes the fine arts and miscellaneous fine arts. "Liberal arts" includes liberal arts, history, and humanities. "Other visual and performing arts fields" includes individuals who reported a bachelor's degree major aligned with the visual and performing arts but is not captured in any of the detailed fields of study within this category. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

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

Concentrations of bachelor's degrees awarded in the visual and performing arts to people who chose other occupations



Another way to examine data on those with bachelor's degrees in the visual and performing arts is to consider what proportion of them work as artists, or in other cultural occupations, versus in other jobs entirely. In 2022, 19 percent of people in the labor force with a bachelor's degree in the visual performing arts were some type of working artist, and 3 percent worked in other cultural occupations (**Figure A4-5**). The remaining 78 percent of these degree recipients were working in other occupations entirely.¹³ Within the latter category, 14 percent of the visual and performing arts degree-holders were in management,¹⁴ 13 percent were in educational instruction¹⁵ and library occupations, 8 percent each were in office and administrative support positions or sales and related jobs, and 7 percent were in business and financial operations.

Within the visual and performing arts (see **Table A4-3**):

- 17 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored the fine arts worked in an artist occupation and 2 percent worked in other cultural worker occupations, while 13 percent each worked in either educational instruction and library occupations or management.
- 12 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored drama and theater arts worked in an artist occupation and 3 percent worked in other cultural workers occupations, while 15 percent worked in management and 10 percent in office and administrative support positions.

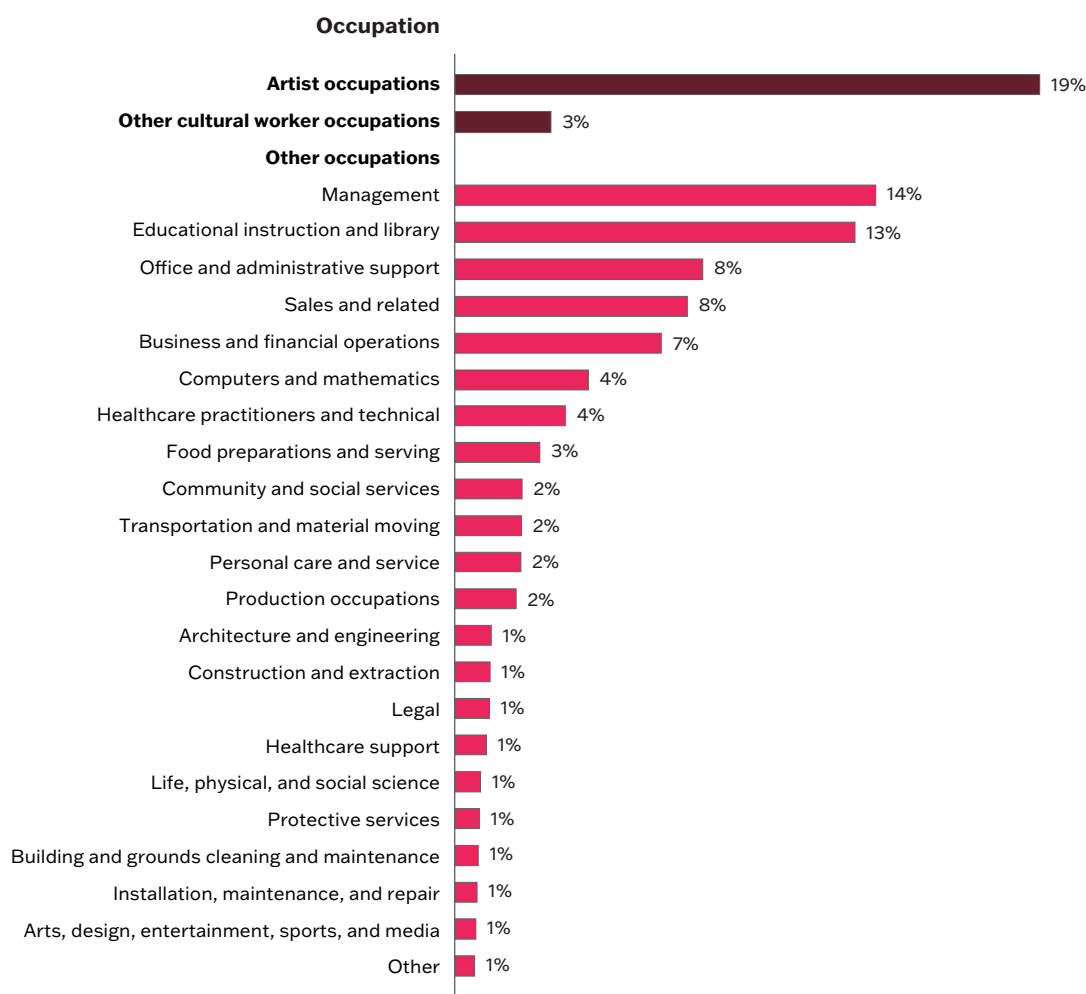
- 14 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored in music worked in an artist occupation and 3 percent worked in other cultural workers occupations, while 24 percent worked in educational instruction and library occupations and 12 percent in management.
- 32 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored in commercial art and graphic design worked in an artist occupation and 1 percent worked in other cultural workers occupations, while 15 percent worked in management.
- 19 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored in film, video, and the photographic arts worked in an artist occupation and 10 percent worked in other cultural workers occupations, while 19 percent worked in management.
- 8 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored in art history and criticism worked in an artist occupation and 7 percent worked in other cultural workers occupations, while 15 percent worked in management, 13 percent worked in educational instruction and library occupations, 12 percent worked in business and financial operations, and 10 percent worked in office and administration support positions.
- 15 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored in studio arts worked in an artist occupation and 4 percent worked in other cultural workers occupations, while 16 percent worked in educational instruction and library occupations and 12 percent in management.
- 10 percent of bachelor's degree recipients who majored in other visual and performing arts fields worked in an artist occupation and 2 percent worked in other cultural workers occupations, while 20 percent worked in educational instruction and library occupations and 16 percent in management.

¹³ Artist and other cultural worker occupations are counted separately and excluded from the other occupation groups.

¹⁴ Managers are not classified as artists but may be classified as arts managers if they are managers in arts-related industries. See **Indicator A.6: Who Are the Arts Managers?** for more information.

¹⁵ "Educational instruction includes teachers and assistants at the preprimary, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

Figure A4-5. Percentage distribution of U.S. workers with bachelor's degrees in the visual and performing arts, by occupation group: 2022



NOTE: "U.S. workers" includes individuals in the labor force currently employed (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. "Other occupations" does not include artist and other cultural worker occupations, which are counted separately. Separate data for farming, fishing, and forestry and military-specific occupations were not available.

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

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