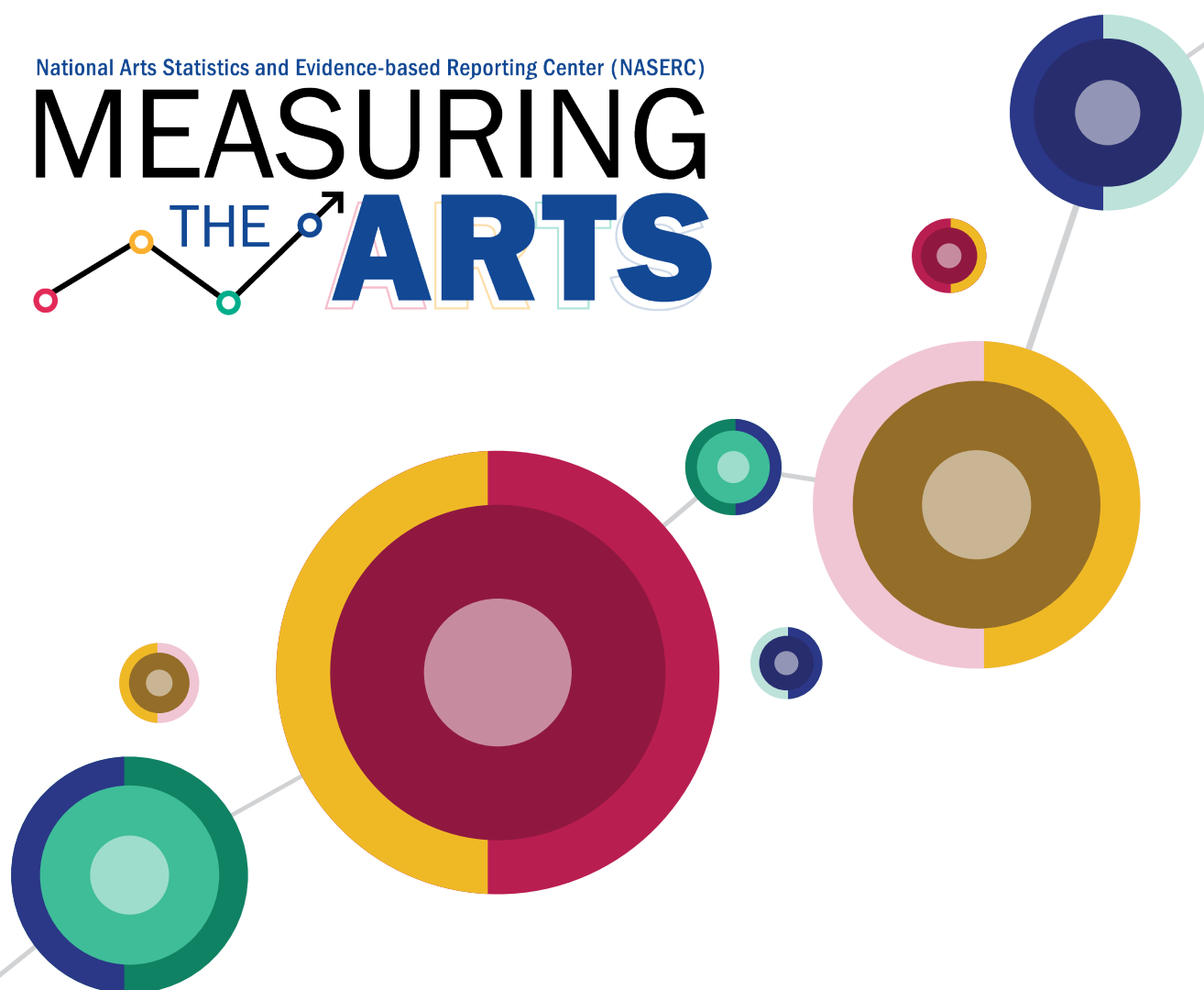


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

MEASURING THE ARTS

A decorative graphic featuring a line graph with three data points (red, orange, green) and an upward-pointing arrow, positioned to the left of the word 'THE' in the title.

Domain A

Artists and Other Cultural Workers



Indicator A.5: **What is the Labor Market Status of Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**

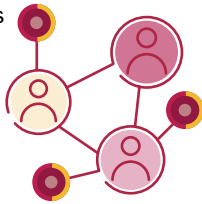
Introduction



Indicator A.5 uses data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) to highlight employment patterns for artists and other (non-artist) cultural workers in the U.S. labor force. While the American Community Survey (ACS) is the primary data source used in the Artist and Other Cultural Workers domain, the CPS includes additional detail on the labor force characteristics that are not tracked by the ACS, such

The Current Population Survey

Unlike most other indicators in this series, Indicator A.5 is based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) rather than the American Community Survey (ACS). The CPS is a monthly survey primarily designed to provide current information on changes in the labor force. It contains more detailed questions on employment status than the ACS. In contrast, the ACS has a far larger annual sample and provides more detail at geographic levels and for smaller population groups. The CPS is used in this indicator to enable analyses of workers with multiple jobs and to look at preferences for full- and part-time employment, which are not collected in ACS. The annual averages of CPS data presented in this indicator are derived by averaging the 12 monthly CPS results in their respective years. While the ACS and CPS data show similar patterns over time, their numbers do not match because of differences in methodology, sampling variance, and the broader coverage of the ACS survey. Additionally, the ACS includes the civilian noninstitutional population covered in CPS, but also includes persons in institutional and noninstitutional group quarters. For more information, see the Census Bureau's [Fact Sheet](#) on differences between the ACS and the CPS.



as employment in two or more jobs and reasons for part-time employment. Since the CPS is a monthly rather than annual survey, it is also possible to report more recent information on labor force status for artists and other cultural workers. The monthly data from the CPS have been averaged to produce annual estimates. However, some estimates in this indicator may differ slightly from those produced using ACS data in other indicators, such as **Indicator A.1: Who Are the Artists?** and **Indicator A.2: Who Are the Other Cultural Workers?** For more information on the CPS and differences from the ACS, see *The Current Population Survey*.

In compiling data for Indicator A.5 and other indicators in this series, artists and other cultural workers have been defined by their self-reported primary occupation.¹ This indicator includes artists and other cultural workers who are in the labor force—i.e., either currently employed as an artist or other cultural worker or unemployed and looking for work in one of these occupation areas. It captures employed artists and other cultural workers in the labor force regardless of work intensity (full-time or part-time status) and class of worker.² Another indicator in this series—**Indicator C.3: How Many Artists and Other Cultural Workers are Employed in Arts Organizations and Businesses?**—looks at artists and other cultural workers by industry and class of worker (private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed) using the ACS.

¹ “Primary occupation” refers to the kind of work a person does for pay most of the time. The Current Population Survey (CPS)—the data source on which this indicator is based—asks about the occupation corresponding with a respondent’s current or most recent job or, if they have two or more jobs, the occupation of both their primary job (the job with the most usual hours worked), as well as the occupation of their secondary job. For more information see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/methodology/industry-and-occupation-classification.html>.

² While these occupational concepts are similar to those used in **Indicator A.1: Who Are the Artists?** and **Indicator A.2: Who Are the Other Cultural Workers?** some estimates may differ due to the use of different data sources.

Trends in the number and percentage of artists and other cultural workers in the labor force

According to the CPS, the number of persons in the total U.S. labor force increased by 6 percent overall between 2015 and 2023, from 155.7 million workers to 165.4 million workers (see [Table A5-1](#)).³ The number of artists increased at a faster rate than the total labor force during this time. The number of artists increased by 14 percent from 2.3 million in 2015 to 2.7 million in 2023 ([Figure A5-1](#)).

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; other 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 NEA's 2022 publication [Arts Data Profile #31—Artists in the Workforce: National and State Estimates for 2015–2019](#).

The most rapidly increasing artist occupation⁴ over this period was fine artists, which grew by 51 percent from 230,000 in 2015 to 347,000 million in 2023. Fine arts occupations include painters, sculptors, illustrators, art directors, and animators. The numbers of architects, photographers, and writers also increased during this period. There were no measurable changes in the numbers of designers, performers (such as actors, dancers, and musicians), or producers. Overall, the percentage of the labor force who were artists increased from 1.5 percent in 2015 to 1.6 percent of the labor force in 2023. The percentage of the labor force

who were artists in 2023 was also higher than in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic (1.5 percent). The number of other cultural workers in 2023 (1.1 million) was not measurably different from the number in 2015 (also 1.1 million) but was higher than the number of other cultural workers in 2019 (982,000).

Other cultural worker definition

Other cultural workers are individuals whose primary occupation supports the arts but is not an artist-related occupation. This indicator uses 15 occupations to capture other cultural workers:^a 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; motion picture projectionists; 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. Estimates of other cultural workers include all workers employed in these cultural 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.

^a 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](#).

Employment characteristics of artists and other cultural workers

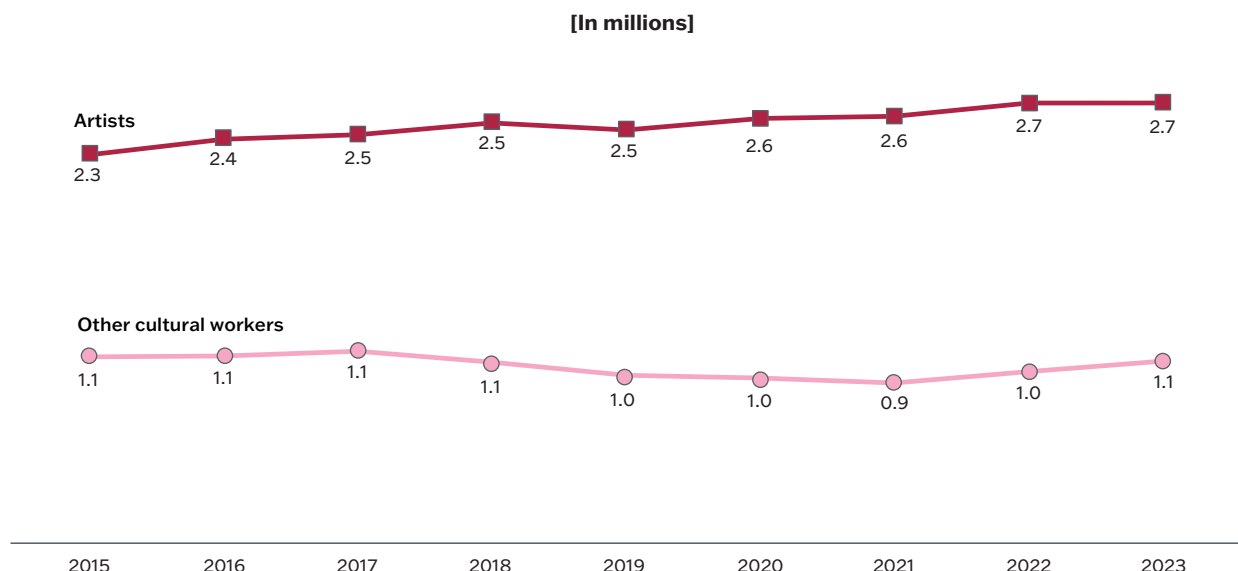
The CPS allows the reporting of part-time employment by total hours worked per week at any job: 1–9 hours, 10–19 hours, 20–34 hours, or “hours vary” (see [Table A5-2](#)). The patterns of artist employment differ in significant aspects from the total U.S. labor force. Artists and other (non-artist) cultural workers were less likely to be employed full time than

³ 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.

⁴ “Architects” include architects and landscape architects. “Fine artists” include fine artists, art directors, and animators. “Performers” include actors; announcers; dancers and choreographers; entertainers; and musicians, music directors, and composers. “Producers” include producers and directors. “Writers” include writers and authors.

Figure A5-1. Number of artists and other cultural workers in the labor force: 2015–2023

Labor force



NOTE: Annual data are averaged over a 12 month period. Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons in the military and persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities). Artists and other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed primarily in an artist or 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 artist or other cultural worker occupation.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), January 2015–December 2023.

workers in the total labor force.⁵ In 2023, 81 percent of persons in the total labor force worked full time compared to 74 percent of artists and 72 percent of cultural workers (**Figure A5-2**). Conversely, artists were employed in all part-time work hourly categories at higher rates than the total labor force. For example, 12 percent of artists worked 20–34 hours per week compared to 10 percent of the total labor force and 4 percent of artists worked 10–19 hours per week compared to 3 percent of the total labor force.⁶ There were also more artists employed in the more intermittent employment categories of 1–9 hours per week and “hours vary” (both 3 percent of artists compared to 1 percent of the total labor force). The unemployment rates of artists (3 percent) and the total labor force (4 percent) were not measurably different.

There were substantial differences in employment patterns across artist occupations. For example, architects (90 percent) and producers (89 percent) were more likely to be employed full time than all artists

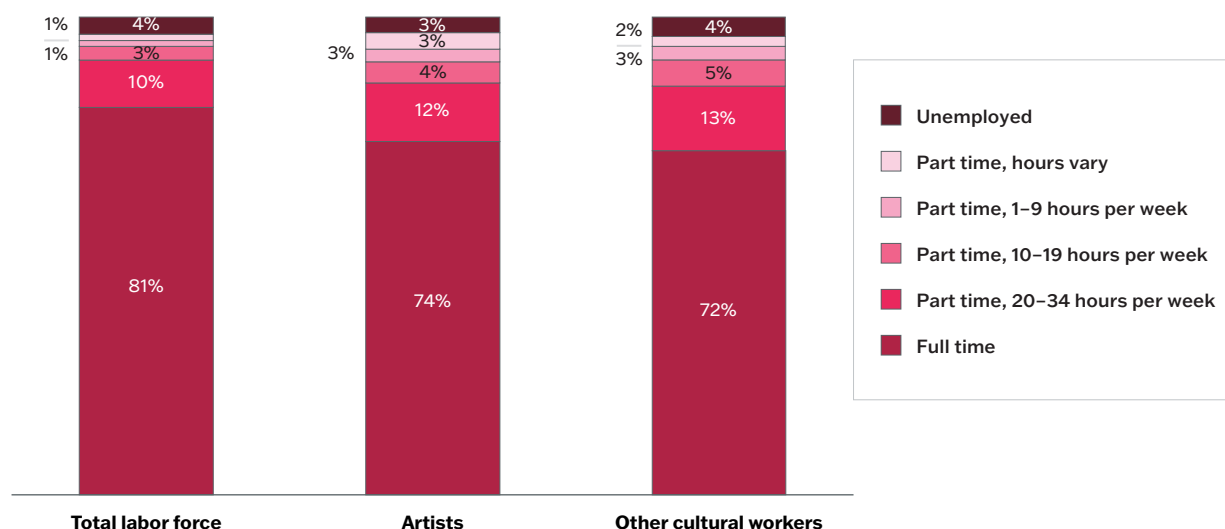
(74 percent) and the total labor force (81 percent). In contrast, performers, such as actors, dancers, and musicians (57 percent) and photographers (62 percent) were less likely than all artists and the total labor force to work full time.

Non-artist cultural workers also were less likely to work full time (72 percent) and more likely to work part time (24 percent) than persons in the total labor force (81 percent and 15 percent, respectively). Also, cultural workers were more likely to work part time 20–34 hours per week (13 percent) than persons in the total labor force (10 percent). Similarly, cultural workers were more likely to work part time 10–19 hours per week than persons in the total labor force (5 percent versus 3 percent) or part time 1–9 hours per week (3 percent versus 1 percent). There were no measurable differences between the percent of cultural workers reporting “hours vary” or being unemployed, compared to the total labor force.

⁵ “Full time” is defined as usually working 35 hours or more per week. “Part time” is defined as usually working less than 35 hours per week.

⁶ Note that hours per week reflects employment in all jobs.

Figure A5-2. Percentage distribution of the total labor force, artists, and other cultural workers, by employment status: 2023



NOTE: Annual data are monthly data averaged over a 12 month period. Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons in the military and persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities). Artists and other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist or 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 artist or other cultural worker occupation. “Full time” is defined as usually working 35 hours or more per week. “Part time” is defined as usually working less than 35 hours per week. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

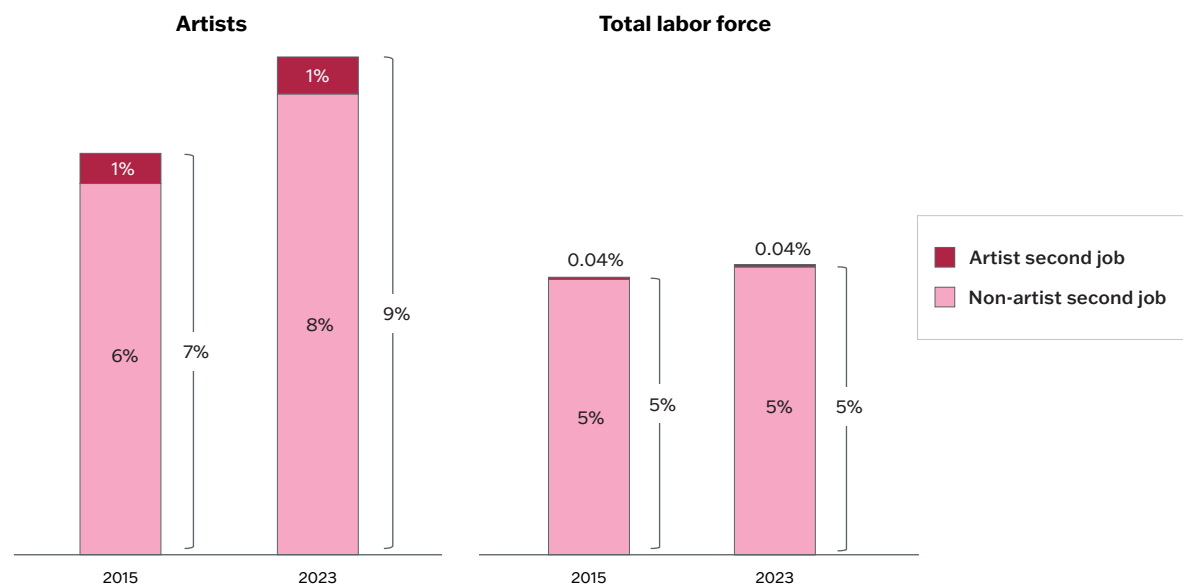
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), January 2023–December 2023.

Artists were more likely to hold two jobs compared to the total U.S. labor force in 2023 (see [Table A5-1](#)). About 9 percent of artists held a second job, compared to 5 percent of the total labor force ([Figure A5-3](#)). Both of these rates reflect increases compared to 2015, when 7 percent of artists and 5 percent of the total labor force held a second job. In 2023, most artists who held a second job held a non-artist second job (8 percent) rather than another artist job (less than 1 percent). The proportion of artists holding a non-artist second job was higher in 2023 (8 percent) than in 2015 (6 percent); the proportion with an additional artist secondary job was unchanged. Fewer than 1 percent of the total labor force held a second job as an artist, unchanged since 2015.

Employment status of artists, by demographic characteristics

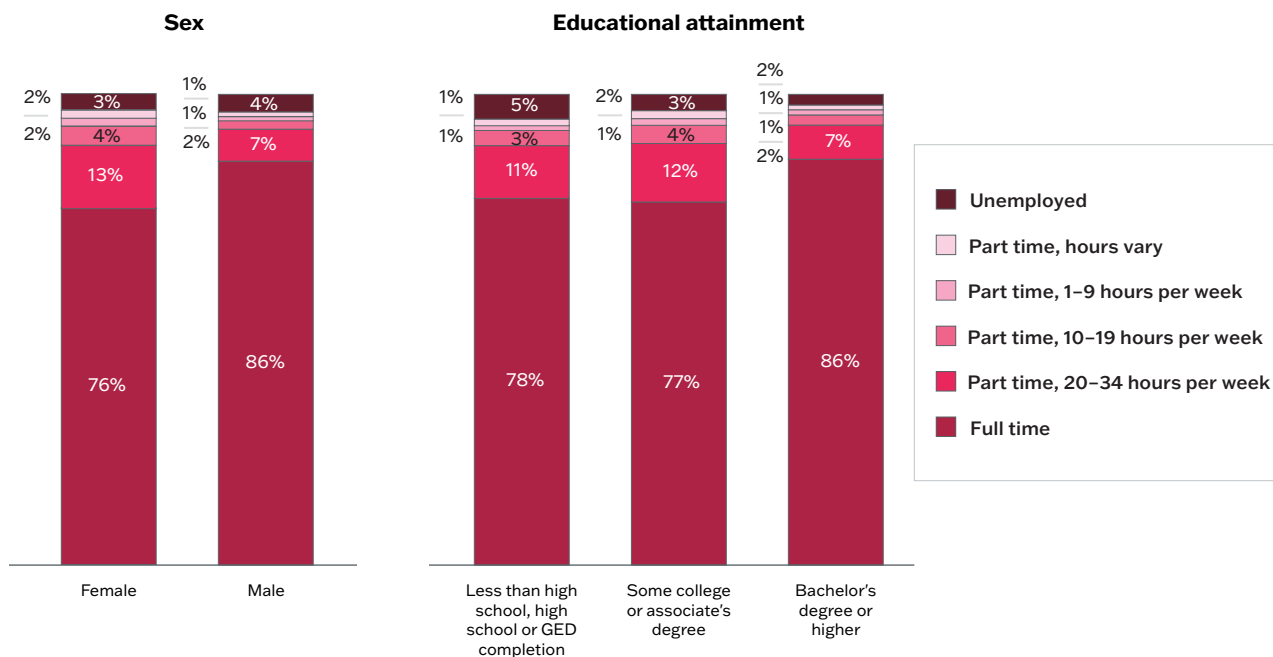
Within the United States, a higher percentage of females than males work part time compared to full time (see [Table A5-3](#)). This pattern was consistent for both artists and other cultural workers. Across the total labor force, about 21 percent of females worked part time compared to 10 percent of males ([Figure A5-4](#)). Among artists, 29 percent of females worked part time compared to 17 percent of males. Similarly, among cultural workers, 33 percent of females worked part time compared to 17 percent of males. There were no measurable differences with respect to full- and part-time employment status of artists and other cultural workers by race/ethnicity.

Figure A5-3. Percentage of the total labor force and artists with secondary jobs, by job type: 2015 and 2023



NOTE: Annual data are monthly data averaged over a 12 month period. Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons in the military and persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities). 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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), January–December 2015 and January–December 2023.

Figure A5-4. Percentage distribution of artists in the labor force, by employment status, sex, and educational attainment: 2023



NOTE: Annual data are monthly data averaged over a 12 month period. Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons in the military and persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities). Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed primarily 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. “Full time” is defined as usually working 35 hours or more hours per week. “Part time” is defined as usually working less than 35 hours per week. “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, Current Population Survey (CPS), January–December 2023.

Similarly to the pattern for the general labor force, artists with a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to work full time than those with lower levels of educational attainment. In 2023, a higher percentage (78 percent) of artists with a bachelor's degree or higher worked full time compared to artists with a high school education or less (65 percent) or with some college⁷ or an associate's degree (66 percent). Artists with no more than a high school education were more likely to be unemployed (6 percent) than those with a bachelor's degree or higher (3 percent). There was no measurable difference in the unemployment percentages for artists who had completed some college or an associate's degree (4 percent) compared with those with a bachelor's degree or higher. Some of these patterns were observed for cultural workers. For example, those with some college or an associate's degree were less likely to work full time (60 percent) than either those with a high school education or less (73 percent) or with a bachelor's degree or higher (77 percent).

Reasons for part-time employment



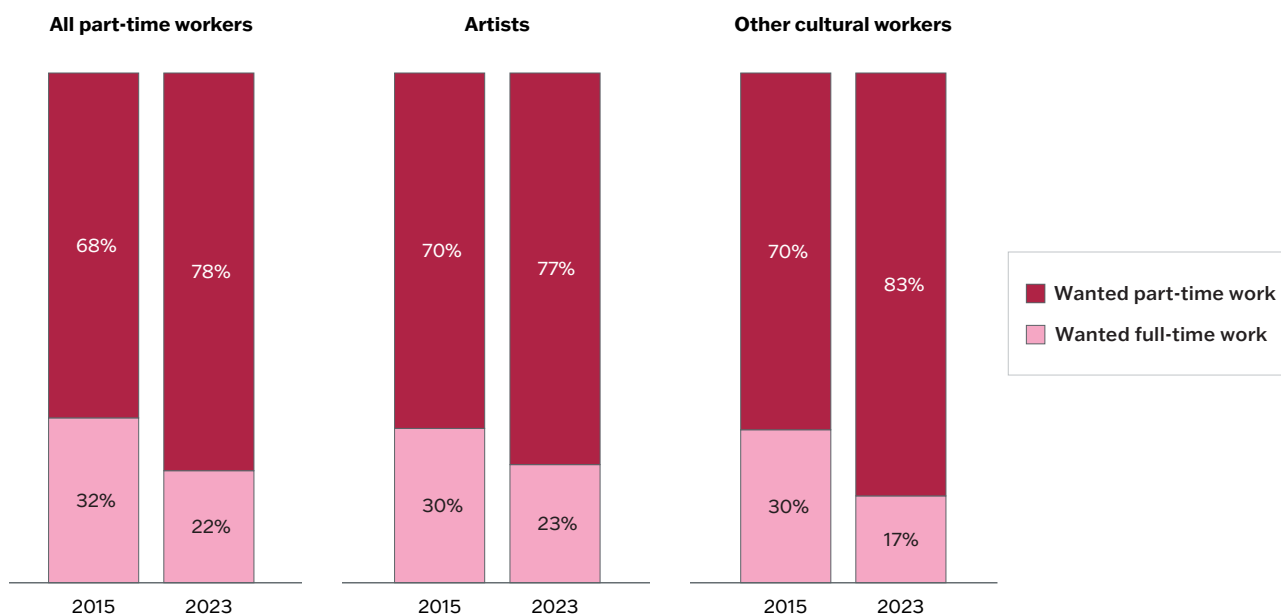
There is sometimes a presumption that most part-time workers would prefer full-time work if they could find it. However, the CPS data show that an increasing majority of part-time workers prefer part-time employment (see **Table A5-4**). For the total U.S. labor force, the percentage of part-time workers who wanted part-time work increased from 68 percent in 2015 to 78 percent in 2023 (**Figure A5 5**). The increase was similar for artists, with the percentage of part-time artists wanting part-time employment increasing from 70 percent to 77 percent during the same period. The percentage of part-time other cultural workers wanting part-time employment also increased from 70 percent in 2015 to 83 percent in 2023.

It is important to note that the reasons why an individual may seek part-time or full-time employment vary. Among workers in the total U.S. labor force wanting full-time work but unable to find it, the most common reason cited was slack work.⁸ In 2023, slack work was cited by roughly equivalent percentages of the total part-time employed labor force (9 percent), part-time employed artists (11 percent), and part-time employed other cultural workers (8 percent). Among all part-time workers, some of the most frequently cited reasons for wanting part-time employment were school/training (21 percent), family/personal obligations (19 percent), and retirement/social security limitations on earnings (15 percent). The same reasons for wanting part-time employment were also frequently cited by part-time employed artists, with 21 percent citing family/personal obligations and 18 percent citing retirement/social security limitations on earnings. However, the percentage of part-time employed artists citing school/training as a reason for part-time employment (10 percent) was lower than the percentage for the total part-time employed labor force. Relatively high percentages of part-time employed other cultural workers also cited these three reasons for wanting part-time employment, with 28 percent citing school/training and 18 percent citing retirement/social security limitations, but the percentage citing other family/personal obligations (13 percent) was lower than for the total part-time employed labor force (19 percent).

⁷ "Some college" includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree.

⁸ "Slack work" is defined as or a reduction in hours due to unfavorable business conditions.

Figure A5-5. Percentage distribution of all part-time workers in the total labor force, part-time employed artists, and part-time employed other cultural workers, by interest in working full time: 2015 and 2023



NOTE: Annual data are monthly data averaged over a 12 month period. Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons in the military and persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities). Artists and other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist or 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 artist or other cultural worker occupation. "Full time" is defined as usually working 35 hours or more per week. "Part time" is defined as usually working less than 35 hours per week. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), January–December 2015 and January–December 2023.

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