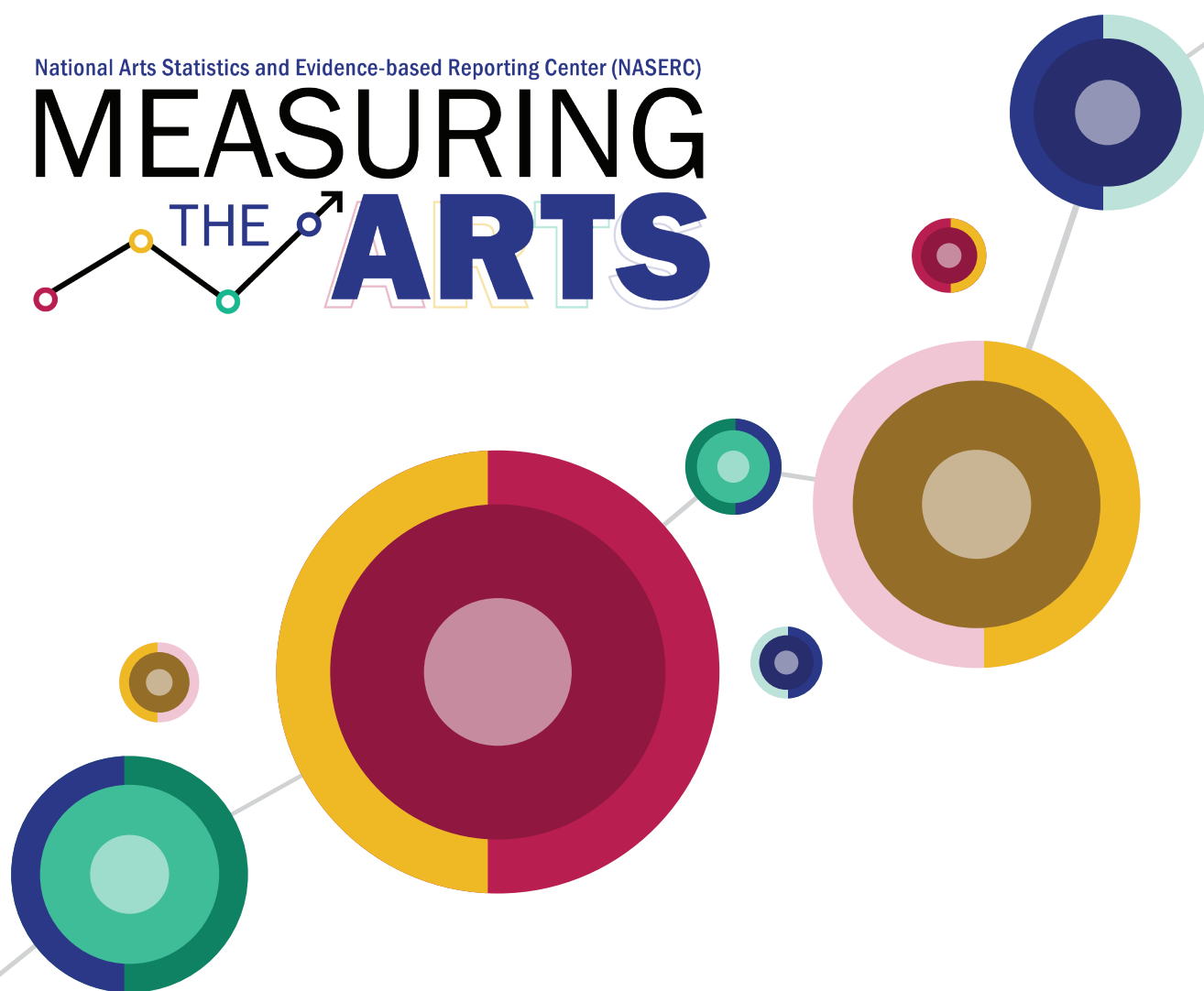


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

# MEASURING THE ARTS



Domain A

**Artists and Other Cultural Workers**



Indicator A.7: **What Are the Earnings for Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**

## Introduction

Indicator A.7 looks at median annual earnings for employed artists and other cultural workers in the total United States labor force, by their full-time or part-time status.<sup>1</sup> It captures employed artists and other cultural workers regardless of class of worker (private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed). Indicator A.7 compares earnings for employed artists and other cultural workers to earnings for all employed workers, and it reports earnings of employed artists by occupation. In this and other indicators in the series, artists and other cultural workers have been defined by their self-reported primary occupation.<sup>2</sup> Indicator A.7 also reports the median annual household income of employed artists and other cultural workers in comparison to the household income of all employed workers.

### Definitions of Median Earnings and Household Income

Earnings are defined in the American Community Survey (ACS) as the sum of wage-salary income and net income from self-employment before deductions for personal income taxes, Social Security, Medicare, etc. An individual with earnings is one who has either wage/salary income, self-employment income, or both. This indicator uses median earnings over the past 12 months from all jobs to compare earnings of artists and cultural workers, aged 18 and over, with the earnings of all workers aged 18 and over. Median earnings divide the income distribution into two equal groups, half with earnings above that amount and half with earnings below that amount. Unlike mean earnings, median earnings either do not change or change very little in response to extreme observations. Household income includes the income of the householder and all other individuals, aged 15 and over, in the household, whether they are related to the householder or not. For more information, see the ACS Technical Documentation.



For more information on the definitions of earnings and household income, see the *Definitions of Median Earnings and Household Income*. Future editions of Indicator A.7 will explore detailed information on earnings of other cultural workers by occupation as well as trends in earnings and household income for artists and other cultural workers. Moreover, **Indicator A.5: What Is the Labor Market Status of Artists and Other Cultural Workers?** will provide statistics on the labor force status and employment characteristics of artists, including trends in employment and unemployment rates, rates of primary and secondary job-holding in the arts, and differences by class of worker.

## Median Annual Earnings of Artists and Other Cultural Workers Employed Full Time

Individuals reporting primary employment as an artist were less likely to be working full time<sup>3</sup> compared to individuals reporting primary employment as an other cultural worker, and all employed workers in general. In 2021, 62 percent of employed artists worked full time (see **Table A7-1**).<sup>4</sup> By comparison, 63 percent of other cultural workers were employed full time, and 71 percent of all workers in the United States were employed full time. However, artists who were employed full time had higher earnings than all other full-time employed cultural workers and employed workers in general. Artists who were employed full time in 2021 earned \$65,710, or 22 percent higher than the earnings of other cultural workers (\$52,890) and 23 percent higher than the earnings of all full-time employed workers in general (\$53,560; **Figure A7-1**). These higher earnings for artists may reflect the fact that artists were generally more likely to have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with the total labor force (see Indicator A.1).

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the definitions of artists and other cultural workers see **Indicator A.1: Who Are the Artists?** and **Indicator A.2: Who Are the Other Cultural Workers?**

<sup>2</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>3</sup> “Full time” is defined as working 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

<sup>4</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* report.

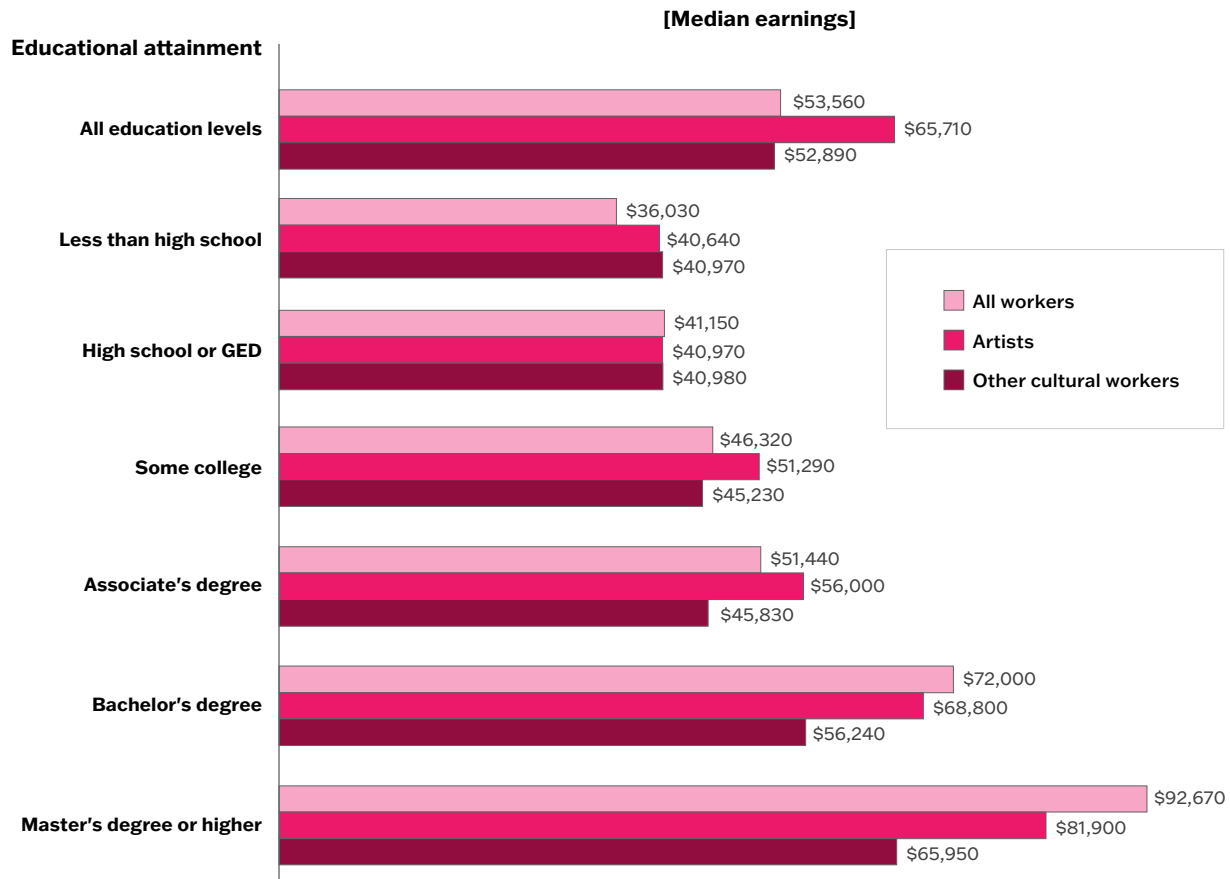
## Median Annual Earnings of Artists and Other Cultural Workers, by Education Level

When comparing median annual earnings by educational attainment, there were limited differences among artists, other cultural workers, and all workers who were employed full time with a high school education or less. Other cultural workers working full time who had not completed high school earned more than all workers with a similar level of education who were employed full time (\$40,970 compared to \$36,030). At these education levels, there were no other measurable differences in earnings among full-time employed artists, other cultural workers, and all workers.

More differences emerged when the analysis focused on workers with some college education. Other

cultural workers who were employed full time and had at least an associate’s degree earned between 12 percent and 41 percent less than all full-time workers with a similar education. Full-time employed artists with some college<sup>5</sup> education earned more than other full-time workers in general (\$51,290 compared to \$46,320). However, full-time employed artists with bachelor’s degree or higher earned less than other full-time employed workers with similar degrees. The earnings of artists employed full time with a bachelor’s degree were 4 percent lower than the earnings of all full-time workers with a corresponding level of education (\$68,800 compared to \$72,000). In addition, full-time employed artists who had a master’s degree or higher earned 12 percent less than similarly educated full-time employed workers in other occupations (\$81,900 compared to \$92,670).

**Figure A7-1. Median annual earnings for all workers, artists, and other cultural workers employed full time, by educational attainment: 2021**



NOTE: “Full time” is defined as working 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year. “Some college” includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree.

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

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

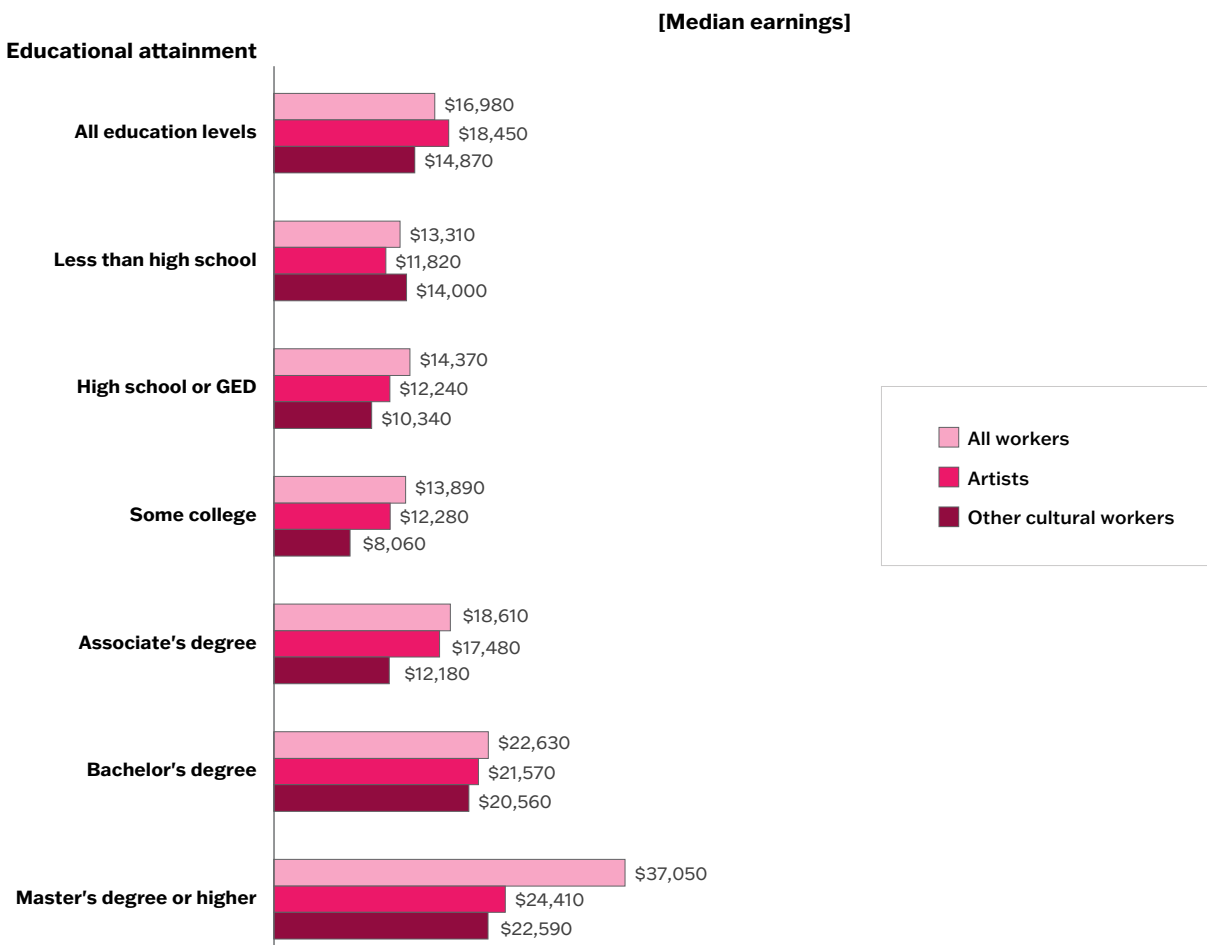
## Median Annual Earnings of Artists and Other Cultural Workers Employed Part Time

Individuals reporting primary employment as an artist were more likely to be working part time,<sup>6</sup> compared to individuals employed as other cultural workers and all employed workers in general. In 2021, 38 percent of employed artists worked part time, compared to 37 percent for other cultural workers and 29 percent of all employed workers (see **Table A7-1**). During that same year, artists employed part time earned 24 percent more (\$18,450) than part-time employed other cultural workers (\$14,870) and

9 percent more than part-time employed workers in general (\$16,980; **Figure A7-2**).

When looking at educational attainment, data show that other cultural workers employed part time who completed high school or any level of postsecondary education except a bachelor's degree earned less than all similarly educated part-time employed workers. Specifically, other cultural workers with some college education employed part time earned 42 percent less than all employed workers with this level of education (\$8,060 compared to \$13,890). Significant differences were also seen at the master's degree or higher level, where both artists (\$24,410) and other cultural workers (\$22,590) employed part time earned less than all workers employed part time (\$37,050).

**Figure A7-2. Median annual earnings for all workers, artists, and other cultural workers employed part time, by educational attainment: 2021**



NOTE: "Part time" is defined as working less than 35 hours per week and/or less than 50 weeks in the year. "Some college" includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree.

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

<sup>6</sup> "Part time" is defined as working less than 35 hours per week and/or less than 50 weeks in the year.

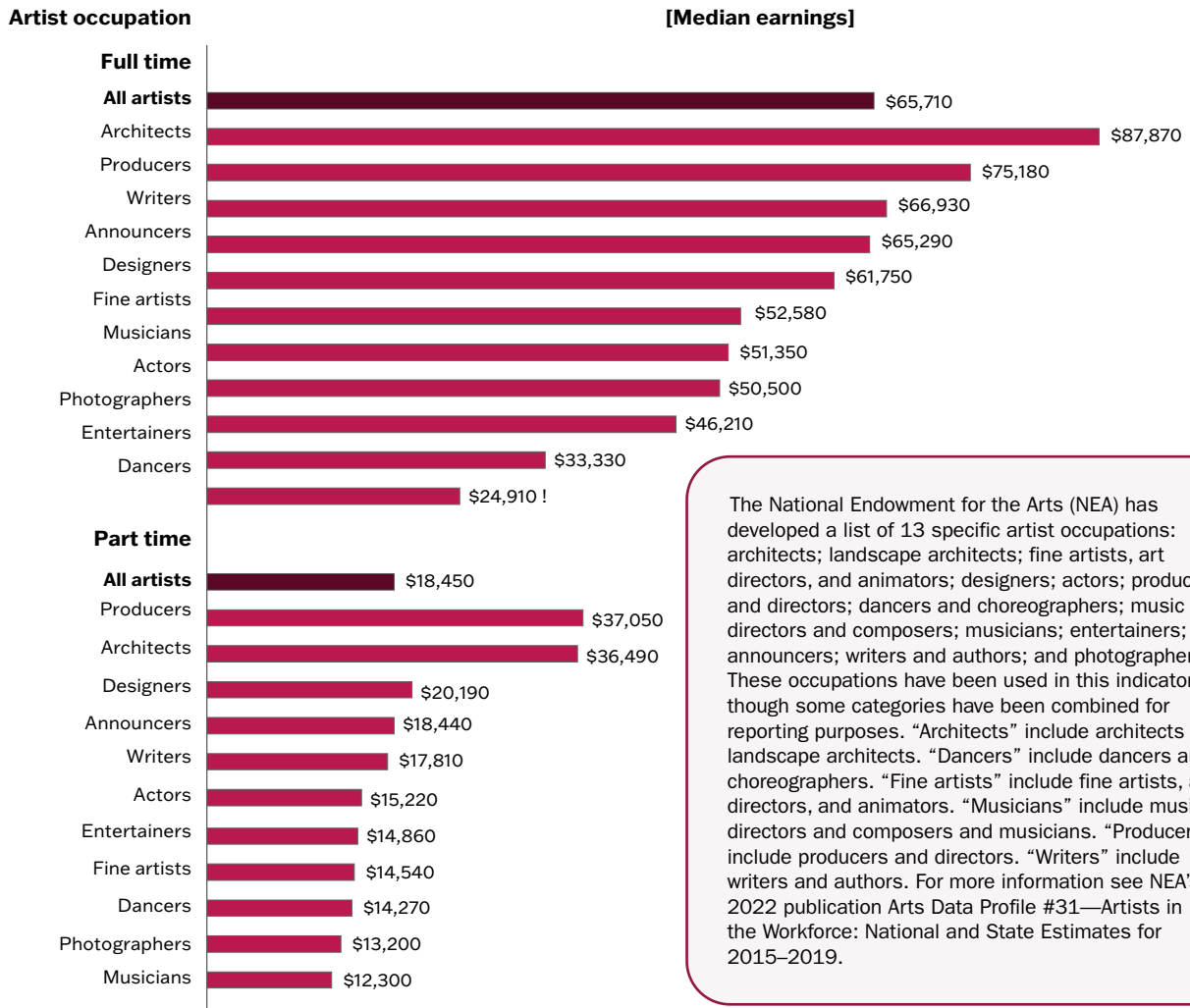
## Median Annual Earnings of Employed Artists, by Occupation



Median annual earnings of employed artists in 2021 varied by occupation. Earnings for full-time employed artists ranged from \$24,910 for dancers to \$87,870 for architects. For part-time employed artists, earnings ranged from \$12,300 for musicians to \$37,050 for producers (Figure A7-3). Among artists employed full time, architects (\$87,870) and producers (\$75,180) earned more than artists generally (\$65,710).

Conversely, fine artists (\$52,580), musicians (\$51,350), photographers (\$46,210), entertainers (\$33,330), and dancers (\$24,910) earned less than other artists generally. Among artists employed part time, architects (\$36,490) and producers (\$37,050) again had earnings above that for all artists (\$18,450) while earnings of fine artists (\$14,540), dancers (\$14,270), photographers (\$13,200), and musicians (\$12,300) were below earnings for all artists. Earnings for all other artist occupations were not measurably different from the earnings of all artists employed full time or part time.

**Figure A7-3. Median earnings of employed artists, by occupation and employment status: 2021**



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 categories have been combined for reporting purposes. "Architects" include architects and landscape architects. "Dancers" include dancers and choreographers. "Fine artists" include fine artists, art directors, and animators. "Musicians" include music directors and composers and musicians. "Producers" include producers and directors. "Writers" include writers and authors. For more information see NEA's 2022 publication Arts Data Profile #31—Artists in the Workforce: National and State Estimates for 2015–2019.

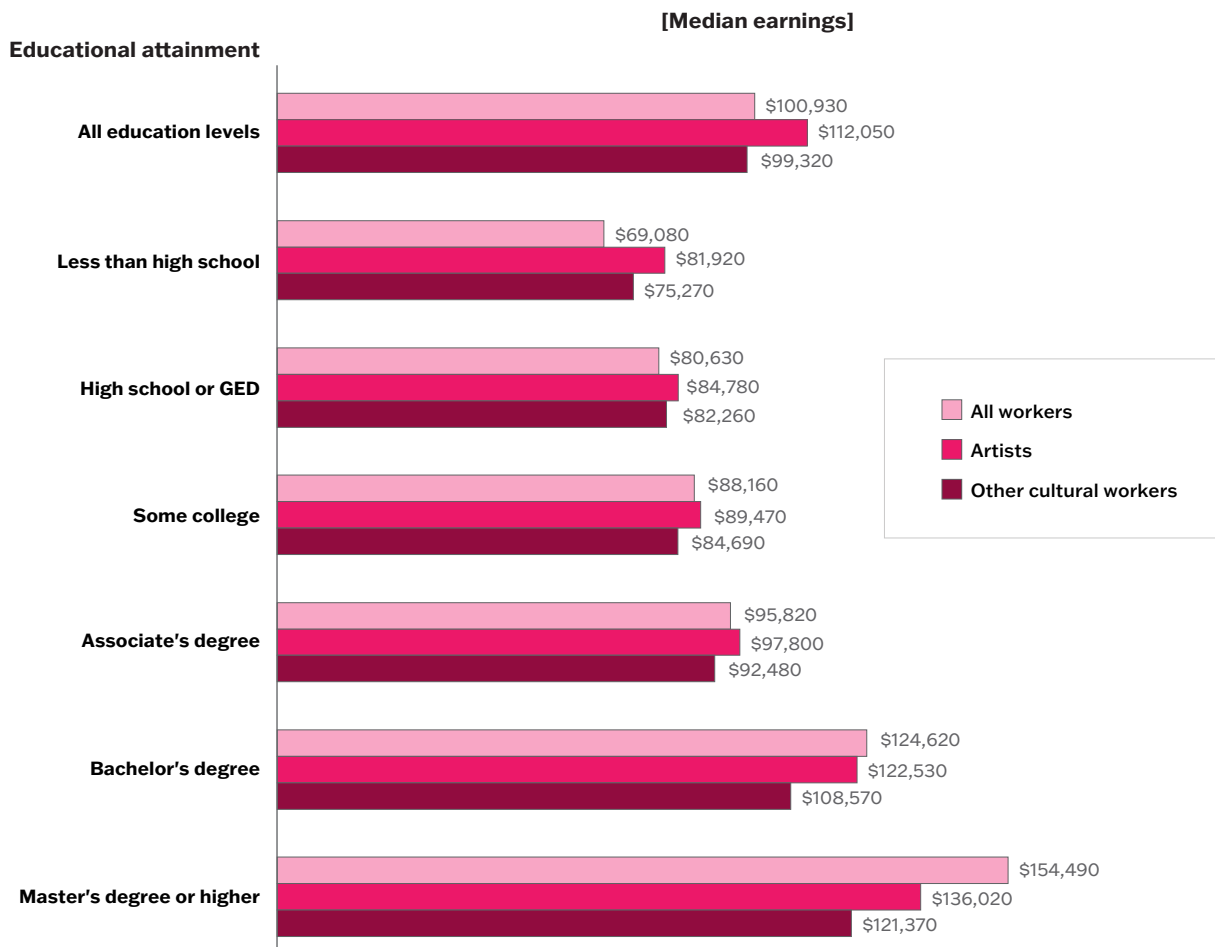
! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.  
 NOTE: "Full time" is defined as working 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year. "Part time" is defined as working less than 35 hours per week and/or less than 50 weeks in the year. "Architects" include architects and landscape architects. "Dancers" include dancers and choreographers. "Fine artists" include fine artists, art directors, and animators. "Musicians" include music directors and 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), 2021.

## Median Annual Household Income of Artists and Other Cultural Workers

The median annual household incomes of artists and other cultural workers were also examined. Household income includes the income of the householder and all other individuals aged 15 and over regardless of their relationship with the householder. Household income for artists and other cultural workers compared to all workers in the U.S.

labor force followed a pattern similar to that of median annual earnings. In 2021, the household income for artists was \$112,050, 13 percent higher than that of other cultural workers (\$99,320) and 11 percent higher than for all workers (\$100,930). However, when looking at workers by educational attainment, the household income of all workers with a master's degree or higher (\$154,490) was 14 percent higher than for artists with this level of education (\$136,020) and 21 percent higher than for other cultural workers with this level of education (\$121,370; **Figure A7-4**).

**Figure A7-4. Median annual household income for all employed workers, artists, and other cultural workers, by educational attainment: 2021**



NOTE: "Some college" includes individuals who attended college but did not receive a degree.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021.

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