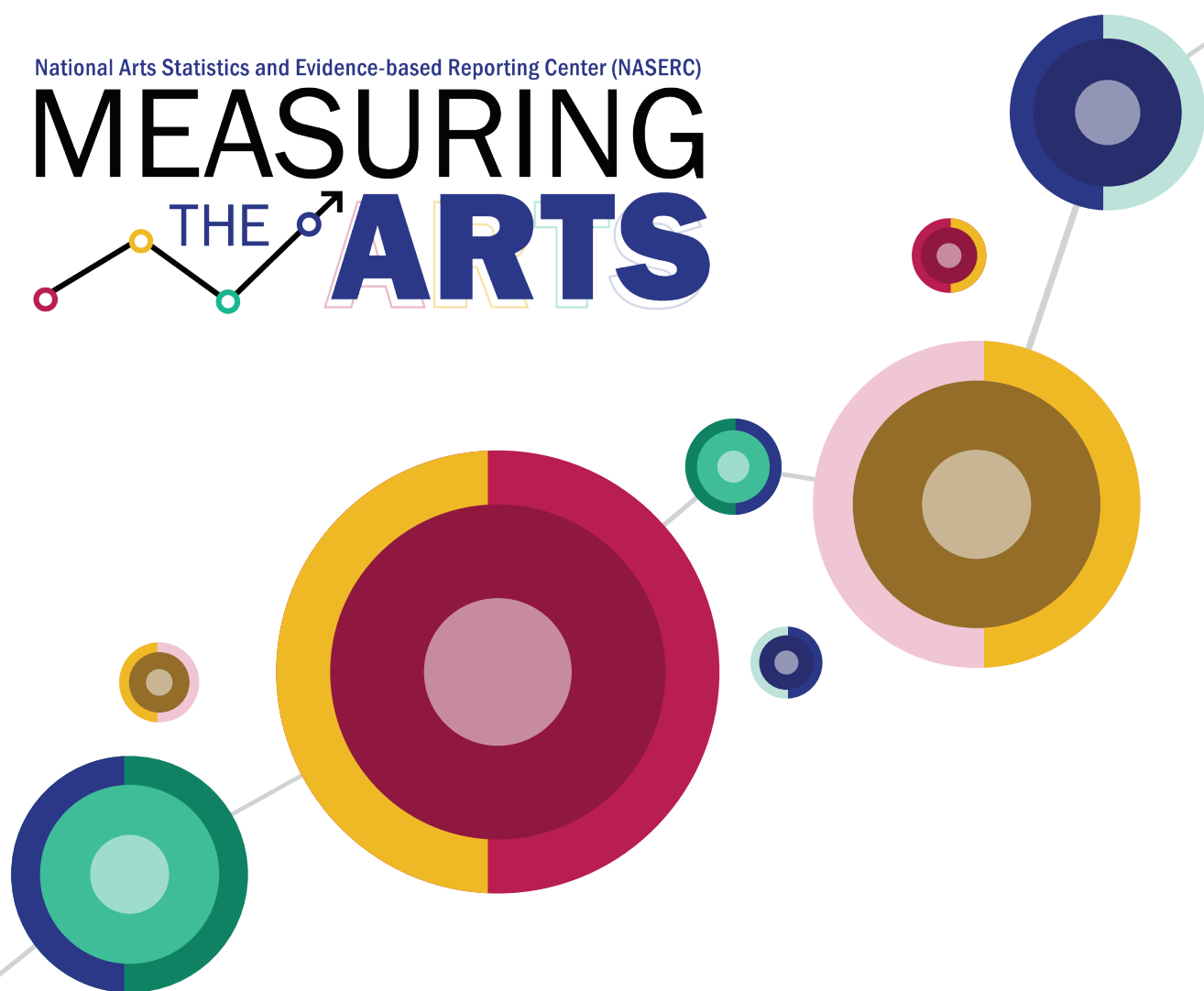


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

# MEASURING THE ARTS



Domain A

**Artists and Other Cultural Workers**



**Indicator A.8: What Are the Labor Market Outcomes for Young Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**

## Introduction



Using data from the American Community Survey, Indicator A.8 compares employed young adults aged 18–29 in artist occupations<sup>1</sup> (young artists) to all employed young adults in the total U.S. labor force, by educational attainment, full-time or part-time status, median annual earnings, and annual household income. It captures employed young artists regardless of class of worker (private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed). In compiling data for this and other indicators, young artists have been defined by their self-reported primary occupation.<sup>2</sup> For more information on the definitions of earnings and household income, see the *Definitions of Median*

*Earnings and Household Income*. While Indicator A.8 uses measures similar to those of **Indicator A.7: What Are the Earnings for Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**, it shows only information about young adults aged 18–29 employed in artist occupations and all occupations. This focused analysis aims to examine labor market outcomes of individuals who have recently left education and entered the labor force. Future editions of this indicator will explore employment and earnings of young adults in other cultural worker occupations.

## Educational Attainment of Young Artists



In 2021, there were about 500,000 young artists aged 18–29 among the 35.4 million employed young adults aged 18–29 in the total labor force. On average, employed young artists had higher levels of educational attainment than employed young adults overall. About half of employed young artists (51 percent) had a bachelor's degree, compared to 23 percent of all employed young adults (**Figure A8-1**).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, 8 percent of employed young artists had a master's degree or higher, compared to 6 percent of all employed young adults. In contrast, 2 percent of employed young artists had not completed high school, compared to 6 percent of all employed young adults, and 14 percent of employed young artists had completed only high school, compared to 29 percent of all employed young adults.

### 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. Indicator A.8 uses median annual earnings over the past 12 months from all jobs to compare earnings of young artists aged 18–29 with the earnings of all workers aged 18–29. 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.

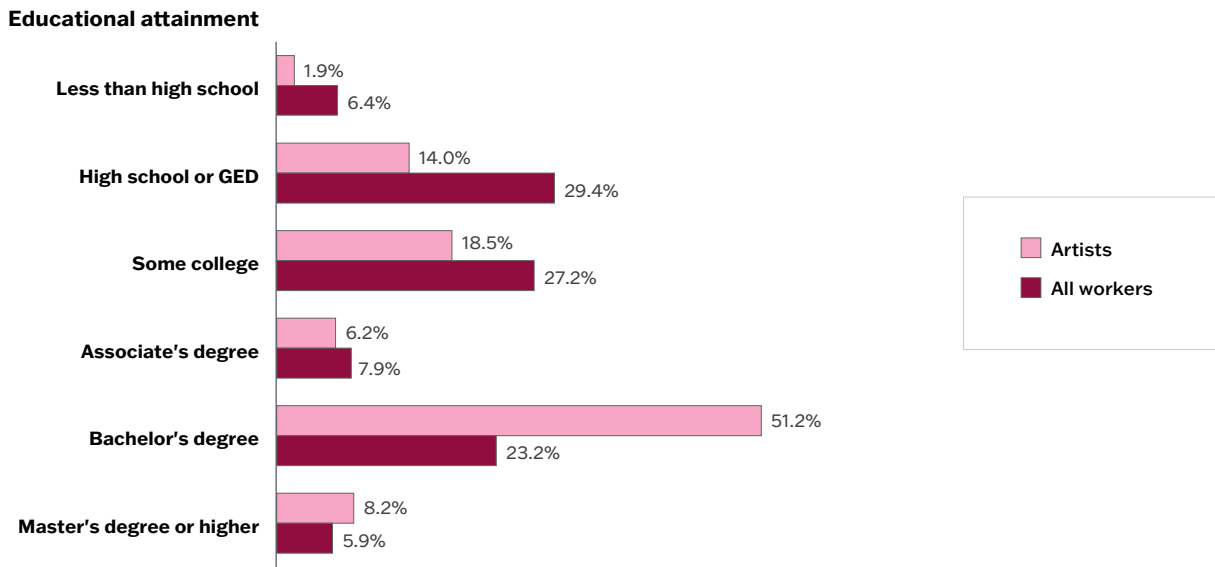


<sup>1</sup> The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has developed a list of 13 specific artist occupations: architects; landscape architects; fine artists, art directors, and animators; designers; actors; producers and directors; dancers and choreographers; music directors and composers; musicians; 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. “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](#).

<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> 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.

**Figure A8-1. Percentage distribution of employed artists and all employed workers in the labor force, aged 18–29, by educational attainment: 2021**



NOTE: Employed 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). “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.

## Full-time and Part-time Employment Status of Young Artists

In 2021, 56 percent of employed young artists worked full time while 44 percent worked part time (Figure A8-2).<sup>4</sup> While there was no measurable difference in the overall proportion of employed young artists working full time in 2021 compared to all employed young adults in the labor force working full time, there were differences by artist occupation. The proportion of employed young architects (75 percent), producers (70 percent), and designers (65 percent) working full time was higher than the proportion of all employed young adults working full time (57 percent); the proportion of employed young actors (26 percent),

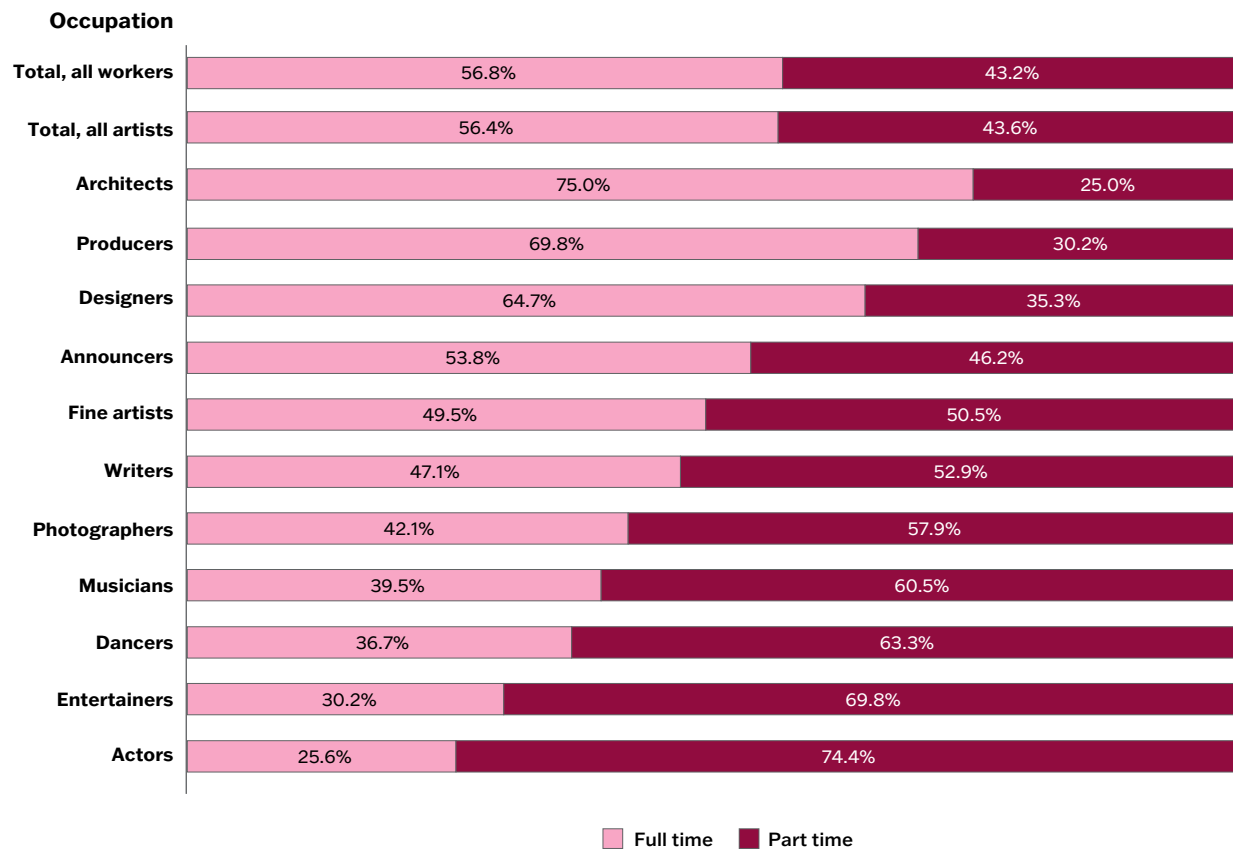
entertainers (30 percent), dancers (37 percent), musicians (40 percent), photographers (42 percent), writers (47 percent), and fine artists (49 percent) working full time was lower.

There were also differences by educational attainment. In 2021, the proportion of employed young artists with only a high school education working full time (43 percent) was lower than the proportion of all employed young adults in the labor force working full time with this level of education (56 percent; see Table A8-1). The proportion of young artists with some college<sup>5</sup> education working full time (38 percent), or with a master’s degree or higher working full time (61 percent), was also lower compared to all employed young adults working full time with these levels of education (47 percent and 72 percent, respectively).

<sup>4</sup> “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.

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

**Figure A8-2. Percentage distribution of all employed workers and artists in the labor force, aged 18–29, by artist occupation and work intensity: 2021**



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, composers, and musicians. “Producers” include producers and directors. “Writers” include writers and authors.

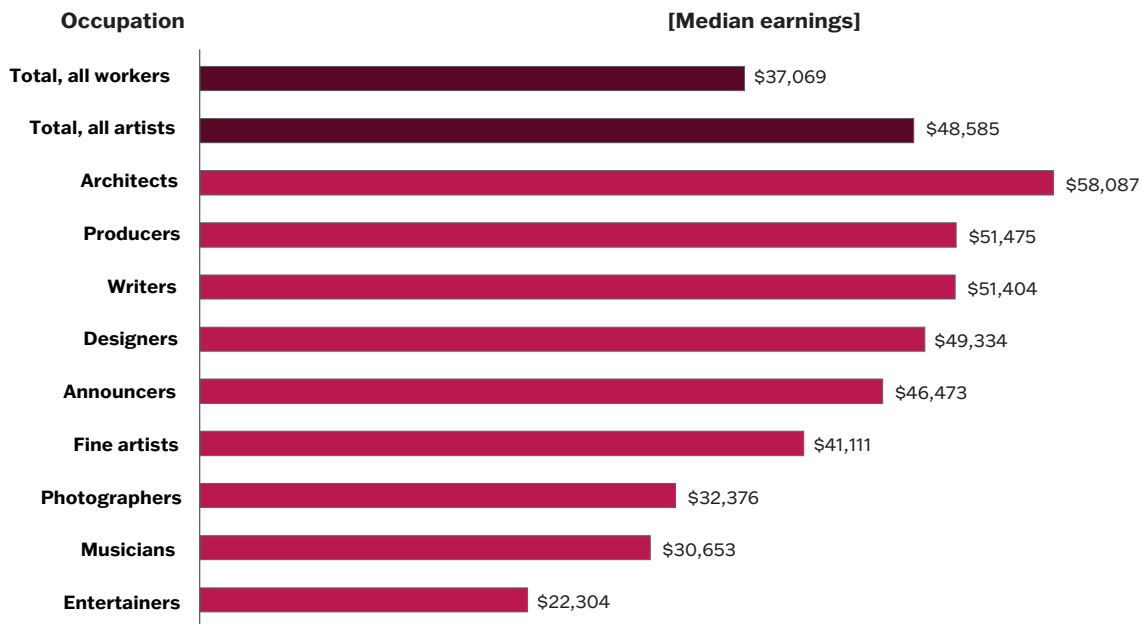
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021.

## Median annual earnings and annual household income of young artists

Overall, median annual earnings for employed young artists working full time (\$48,600) were higher than median annual earnings for all employed young adults in the labor force working full time (\$37,100) in 2021; however, this difference is likely due to the proportionally higher levels of education among employed young artists (see **Table A8-1**). There were no measurable differences in earnings for young artists working full time compared to all young adults working full time, at any of the educational attainment levels.

In 2021, median annual earnings of young artists employed full time as architects (\$58,100), producers (\$51,500), writers (\$51,400), designers (\$49,300), or announcers (\$46,500) were higher than median annual earnings for all employed young adults working full time (\$37,100; **Figure A8-3**). In contrast, median annual earnings for young adults employed full time as entertainers (\$22,300) were lower than the median annual earnings of all employed young adults working full time. There were no measurable differences between median annual earnings for young adults employed full time in any other artist occupations and median annual earnings for all employed young adults.

**Figure A8-3. Median annual earnings for all workers and artists, aged 18–29, employed full time, by artist occupation: 2021**



NOTE: “Full time” is defined as working 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year. “Architects” include architects and landscape architects. “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. Separate data for dancers and actors were not available.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021.

This indicator also explores median household income of young artists. Median annual 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. Young artist households are those with at least one artist aged 18–29 present, though they do not need to be the householder. The pattern for annual household income in 2021 is similar to the pattern observed for median annual earnings, where employed young artists had a higher annual household income (\$91,600) than all employed young adults in the labor force (\$85,600; see **Table A8-1**). This may be attributable, in part,

to the relatively high educational attainment levels of artists since there were few differences in median household income observed between young artists and all workers, when accounting for education level differences. There was only one measurable difference among the education attainment groups—employed young artists with some college education had a lower annual household income (\$68,100) than all employed young adults in the labor force who had some college education (\$78,300). The socioeconomic status of the household overall is also an important factor to consider when comparing the household income of artists to that of the overall labor force.

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