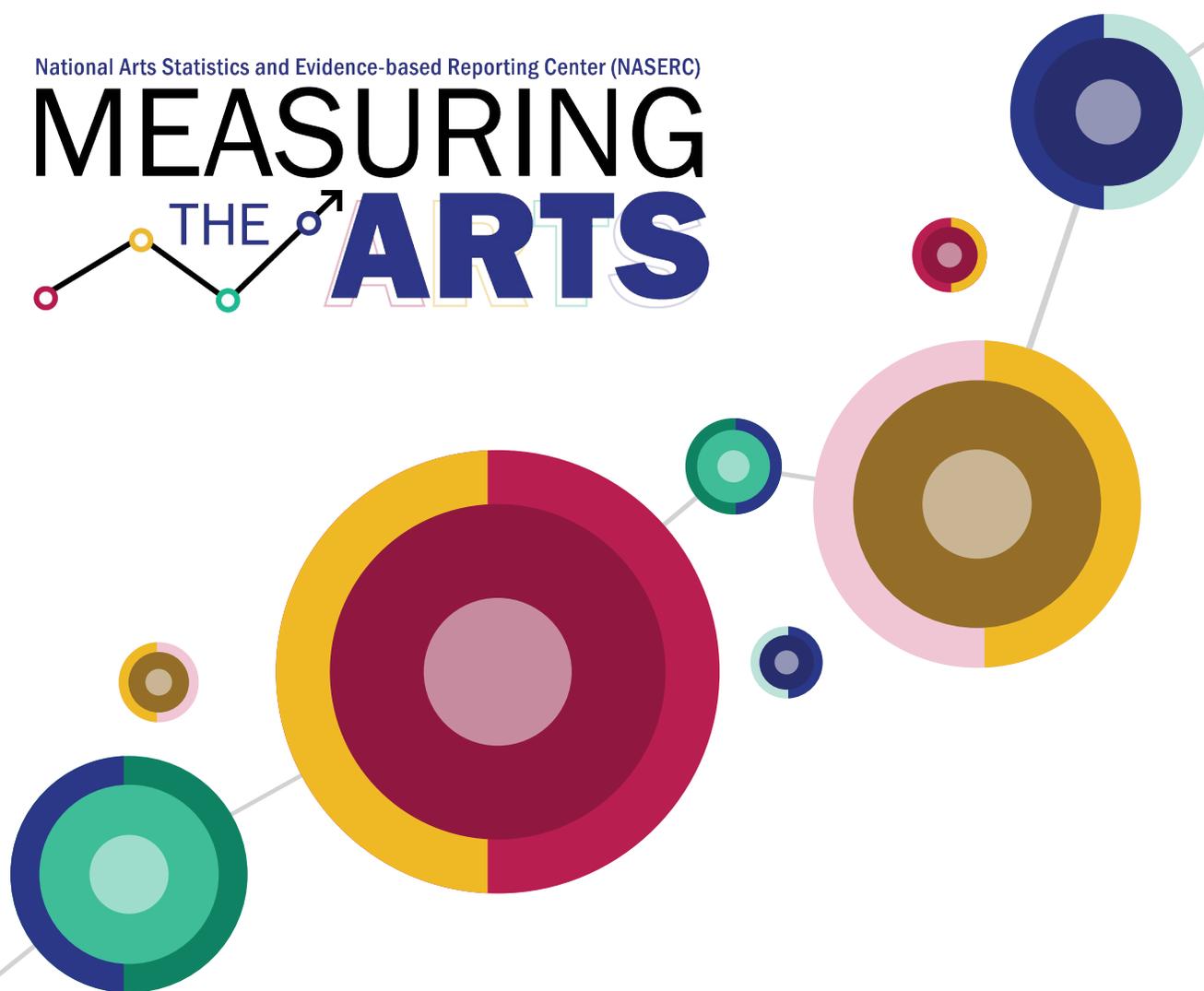


National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC)

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?**

Key Findings

- In 2023, there were about 551,000 artists and 292,00 other (non-artist) cultural workers aged 18–29 in the United States.
- Young artists working full time typically had higher median annual earnings (\$50,950) than all employed young adults working full time (\$40,780).
- The median annual income of households of young artists (\$102,900) was higher than the median annual income of households of all young workers (\$96,850).

Introduction



Indicator A.8 explores the employment characteristics of young adults aged 18–29 who have recently finished their education and started working in arts and cultural occupations.^{1,2} While similar to **Indicator A.7: What Are the Earnings for Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**, which examines earnings for artists and other cultural workers of all ages, Indicator A.8 focuses specifically on young adults as a way to explore the transition period from education to the workforce.

Using data from the American Community Survey, this indicator compares young artists and other (non-artist) cultural workers to all employed young adults in the U.S. labor force. It looks at their educational attainment, whether they work full time or part time, their median annual earnings, and their median annual household income.

In this and other indicators in the series, artists and other cultural workers are defined by their self-reported primary occupation.³ This indicator captures earnings regardless of class of worker (private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed). For more information on the definitions of earnings and household income, see *Definitions of median earnings and household income*. Detailed labor force status and

employment characteristics of artists and other cultural workers are described in **Indicator A.5: What is the Labor Market Status of Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**

Definitions of median earnings and household income



Earnings, as defined in the American Community Survey (ACS), include wage-salary income and net income from self-employment before deductions (e.g., personal income taxes, Social Security, Medicare). An individual with earnings has either wage/salary income, self-employment income, or both. This indicator uses median earnings from the past 12 months from all jobs to compare artists and other cultural workers aged 18 and over with all workers aged 18 and over. Median earnings split 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, regardless of their relationship to the householder. For more information, see the [ACS Technical Documentation](#).

¹ 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*.

² 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. This indicator uses 15 occupations that are included in the American Community Survey (ACS) to capture non-artist cultural workers: archivists, curators, and museum technicians; broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians; editors; etchers and engravers; jewelers and precious stone and metal workers; librarians; 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. These occupations are mostly consistent with those listed in the 2019 NEA publication *Artists and Other Cultural Workers: A Statistical Portrait*. Estimates of non-artist 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. Some cultural occupations have been combined in this indicator for reporting purposes.

³ “Primary occupation” refers to the kind of work a person does for pay most of the time. The 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.

Educational attainment of young artists and other cultural workers

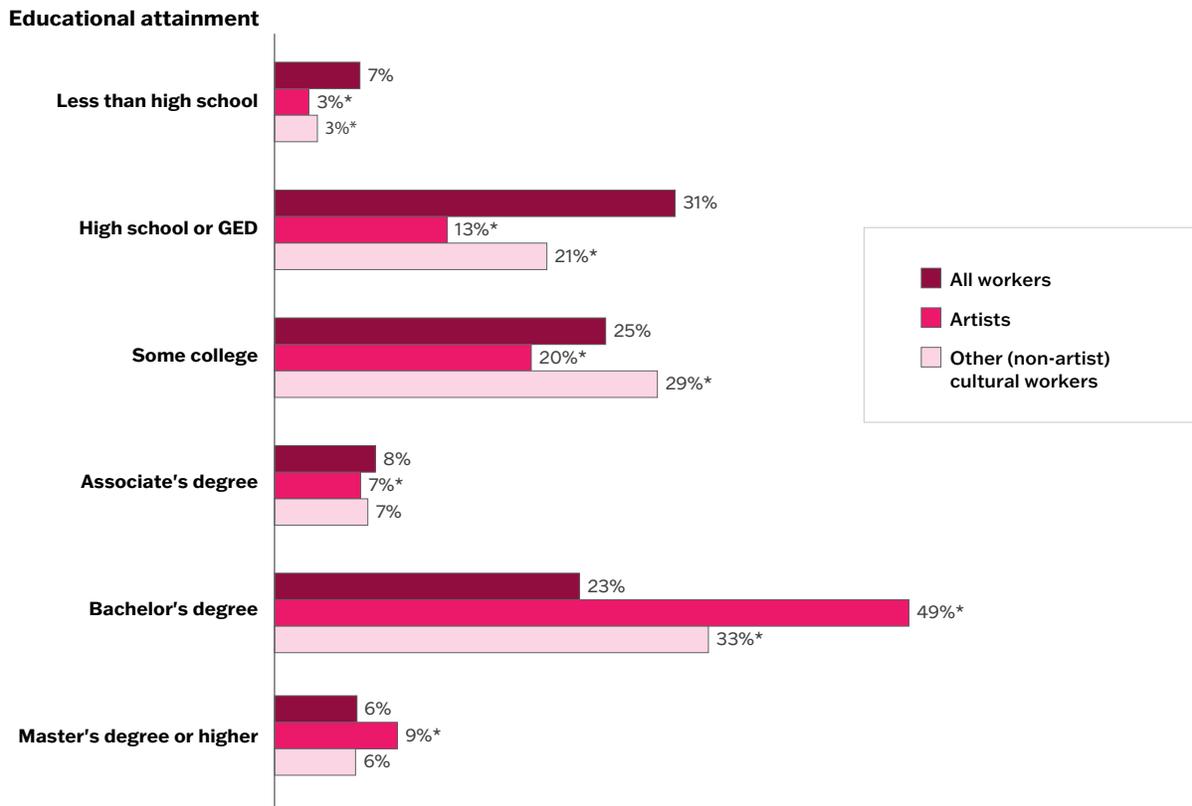


In 2023, there were about 551,000 artists and 292,000 other (non-artist) cultural workers aged 18–29 among the 37.2 million employed workers in this age group. On average, young artists and other cultural workers had higher levels of educational attainment than employed young adults overall. About half of young artists (49 percent) and one third of young non-artist cultural workers (33 percent) had a bachelor’s degree, compared to roughly a quarter of all employed young adults (23 percent; **Figure A8-1**).⁴ Additionally, 9 percent of young artists had a master’s degree or higher, compared to 6 percent of all employed young

workers. Only 3 percent of both young artists and young non-artist cultural workers had not completed high school, compared to 7 percent of all employed young adults. Furthermore, 13 percent of young artists and 21 percent of young non-artist cultural workers had only a high school diploma, compared to 31 percent of all employed young adults.

Employed young artists were generally more educated than young non-artist cultural workers. Young artists were more likely to have a bachelor’s degree (49 percent) or a master’s degree or higher (9 percent), compared to young non-artist cultural workers (33 percent and 6 percent, respectively). Conversely, young artists were less likely to have only a high school diploma (13 percent) or some college education⁵ (20 percent), compared to young non-artist cultural workers (21 percent and 29 percent, respectively).

Figure A8-1. Percentage distribution of all employed workers, artists, and other (non-artist) cultural workers in the labor force, aged 18–29, by educational attainment: 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from all workers.

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), 2023.

⁴ 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.

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

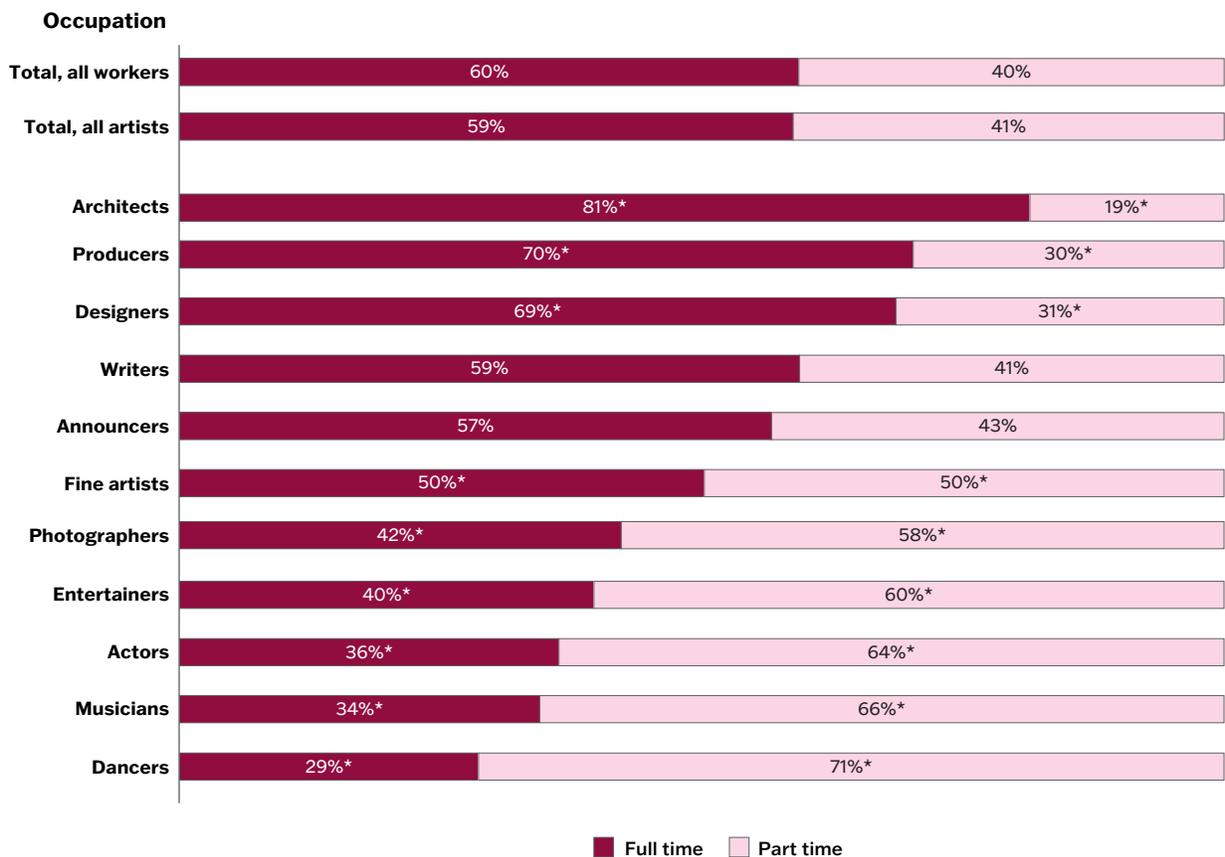
Full-time and part-time employment status of young artists and other cultural workers



In 2023, 59 percent of employed young artists worked full time, while 41 percent worked part time (Figure A8-2).⁶ Overall, young artists were just as likely to be employed full time as all young adults

in the labor force. However, there were notable differences depending on the specific artist occupation. For example, higher proportions of young architects (81 percent), producers (70 percent), and designers (69 percent) worked full time, compared to the overall rate for all employed young adults (60 percent). On the other hand, lower proportions of young dancers (29 percent), musicians (34 percent), actors (36 percent), entertainers (40 percent), photographers (42 percent), and fine artists (50 percent) worked full time.

Figure A8-2. Percentage distribution of all employed workers and artists in the labor force, aged 18–29, by artist occupation and work intensity: 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from all workers.

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

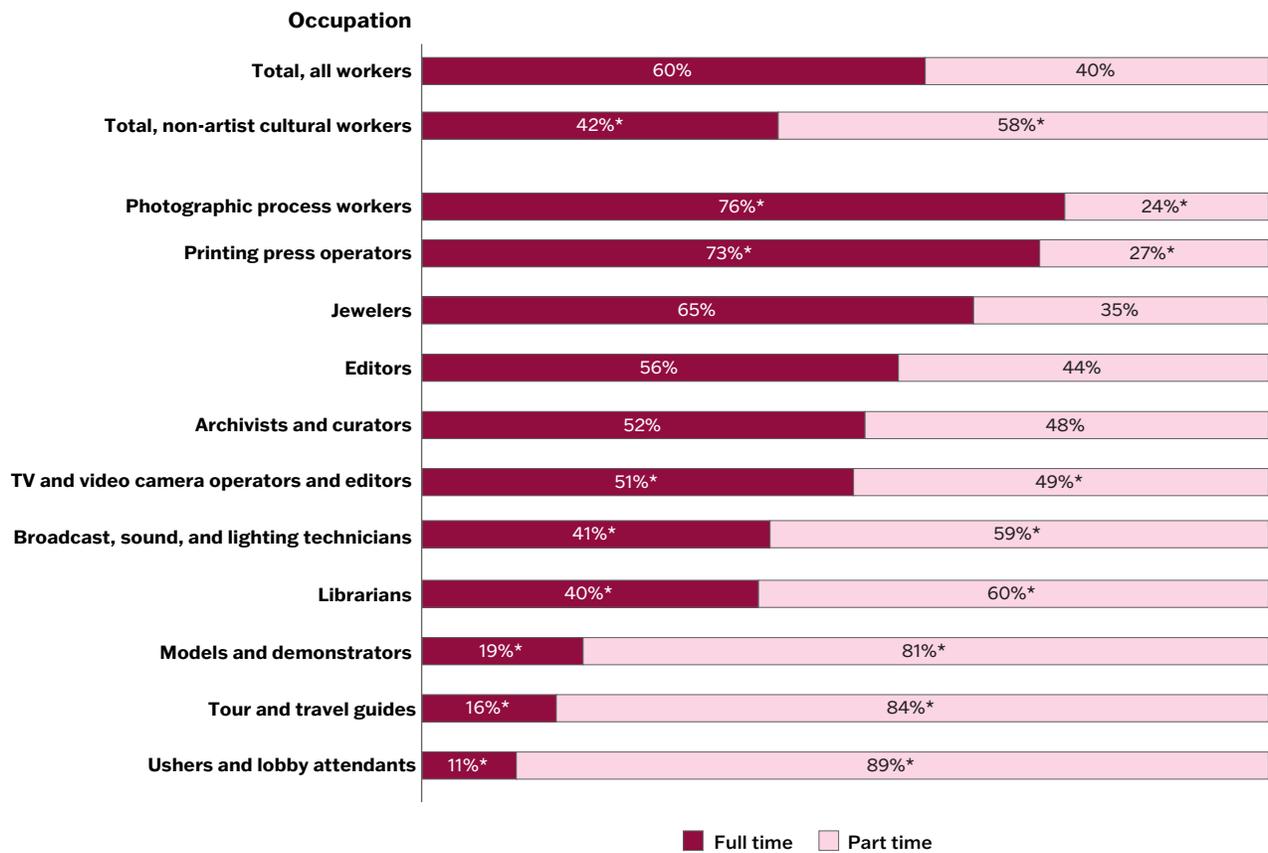
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2023.

⁶ “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.

In contrast, only 42 percent of employed young non-artist cultural workers worked full time, while 58 percent worked part time (Figure A8-3). This group was less likely to be employed full time, compared to young artists (59 percent) and the young adult labor force overall (60 percent). There were also differences by specific cultural occupation. For instance, higher proportions of young photographic process workers

(76 percent) and printing press operators (73 percent) worked full time, while lower proportions of young ushers and lobby attendants (11 percent); tour and travel guides (16 percent); models and demonstrators (19 percent); librarians (40 percent); broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians (41 percent); and TV and video camera operators and editors (51 percent) worked full time.

Figure A8-3. Percentage distribution of all employed workers and non-artist cultural workers in the labor force, aged 18–29, by occupation and employment status: 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from all workers.

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. “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.

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

Educational attainment also influenced full-time employment status. In 2023, the proportion of employed young artists with only a high school education who worked full time (43 percent) was lower than the proportion of all employed young adults with this level of education (59 percent; see **Table A8-1**). Similarly, the proportions of young artists with some college education working full time (40 percent) or with a master's degree or higher working full time (66 percent) were lower than the shares of employed young adults working full time at these education levels (49 percent and 74 percent, respectively).

For young non-artist cultural workers, the proportions working full time with a high school education (42 percent), some college education (17 percent), an associate's degree (32 percent), or a bachelor's degree (60 percent) were lower than the proportions of all employed young adults at these education levels working full time (59 percent, 49 percent, 61 percent, and 71 percent, respectively). However, young artists with some college education (40 percent), an associate's degree (57 percent), or a bachelor's degree (71 percent) were more likely to work full time compared to their young non-artist cultural worker counterparts (17 percent, 32 percent, and 60 percent, respectively).

Median annual earnings of young artists and other cultural workers



In 2023, the median annual earnings for employed young artists working full time were \$50,950, which was higher than the median annual earnings for all employed young adults in the labor force working full time (\$40,780; **Figure A8-4**). Young artists working full time with less than a high school education earned \$46,690, with some college education earned \$40,230, and with an associate's degree earned \$50,940. These

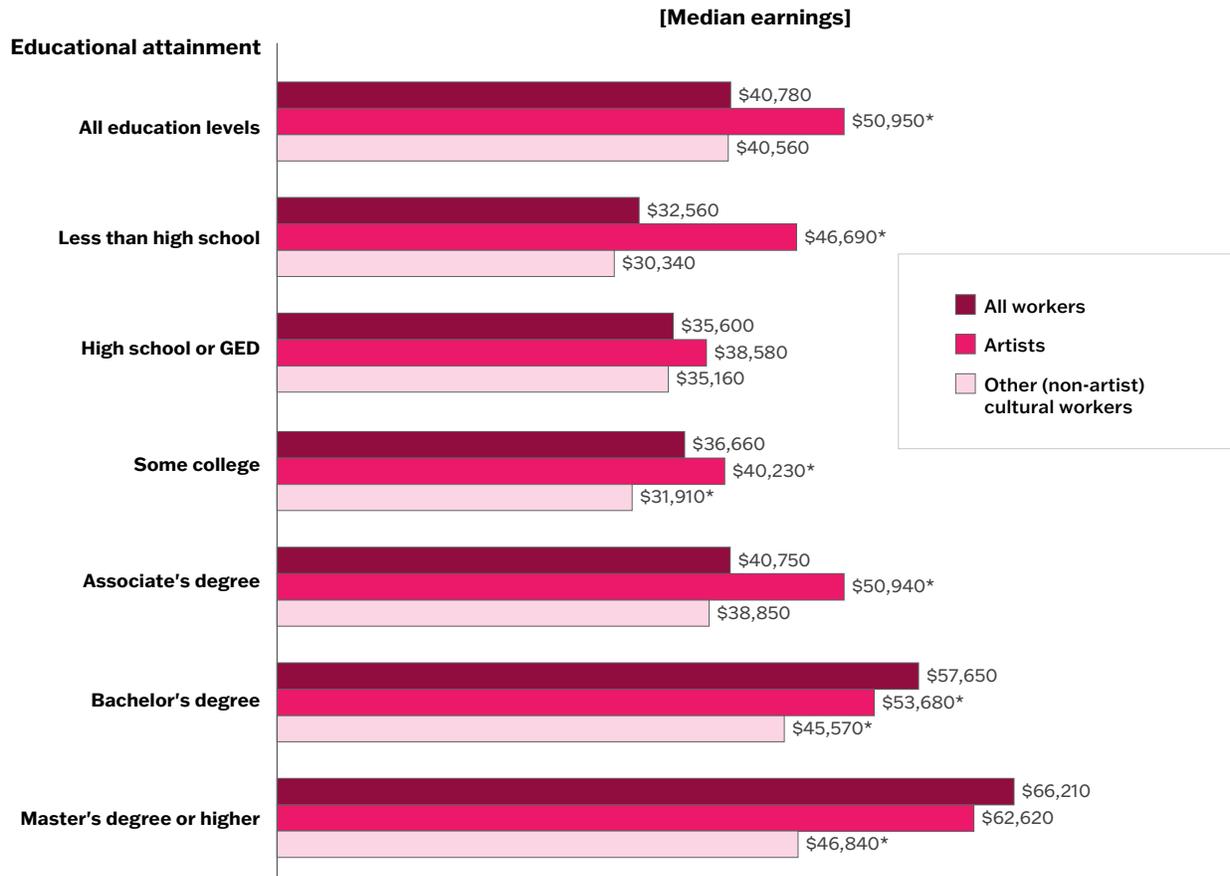
median annual earnings were higher than those for all employed young adults working full time with the same levels of education (\$32,560, \$36,660, and \$40,750, respectively). However, young artists with a bachelor's degree earned \$53,680 annually, which was less than the \$57,650 earned annually by all young adults with the same degree.

Overall, there were no significant differences in median annual earnings for young non-artist cultural workers working full time, compared to all young adults working full time. However, non-artist cultural workers with some college education earned \$31,910, with a bachelor's degree earned \$45,570, and with a master's degree or higher earned \$46,840. These median annual earnings were lower than those of all young adults working full time with the same level of education (\$36,660, \$57,650, and \$66,210, respectively).

The median annual earnings for young artists working full time were generally higher than those for young non-artist cultural workers at all educational attainment levels, except for those with only a high school diploma, where there was no significant difference.

In 2023, young artists employed full time as architects (\$62,540), producers (\$55,110), or designers (\$51,000) had higher median annual earnings than all employed young adults working full time (\$40,780; see **Table A8-1**). For young adults employed full time in other artist occupations, there were no measurable differences in median annual earnings, compared to all employed young adults. Similarly, young non-artist cultural workers employed full time as editors (\$52,490) had higher median annual earnings than all employed young adults working full time (\$40,780). For young adults employed full time in any other non-artist occupations, there were no measurable differences in median annual earnings, compared to all full time employed young adults.

Figure A8-4. Median annual earnings for all full-time employed workers, artists, and other (non-artist) cultural workers in the labor force, aged 18–29, by educational attainment: 2023



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from all workers.
 NOTE: "Full time" is defined as working 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2023.

Median annual household income of young artists and other cultural workers

This indicator also explores the median household income of young artists and other (non-artist) cultural workers. 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 and other cultural worker households are those with at least one artist or other cultural worker aged 18–29 present, though they do not need to be the householder. It is important to note that household income partly

reflects the socioeconomic status of a household; other elements of a household’s socioeconomic status are also important factors to consider when comparing artists and other cultural workers to the overall labor force and to each other.

In 2023, the median annual income of young artist households was \$102,900, which was higher than the median annual income of households of all employed young adults in the labor force (\$96,850; see **Table A8-2**). There were no measurable differences in the median household income between households of young artists and all young adults in the labor force by educational attainment. However, when looking at young adults by artist occupation, households of architects (\$124,510), designers (\$110,190), and

writers (\$111,930) had higher median annual incomes than households of all employed young adults in the labor force (\$96,850), while households of dancers (\$63,110) and musicians (\$87,440) had lower median annual incomes.

For young non-artist cultural workers, there was no measurable difference in median annual income between their households (\$94,780) and the households of all employed young adults (\$96,850). However, the households of employed young non-artist cultural workers with only a high school diploma had a higher median annual income (\$101,270), compared to households of all employed young adults with only a high school diploma (\$89,700). Conversely, households of non-artist cultural workers with a bachelor's degree or a master's degree or higher had lower median annual incomes (\$99,680 and \$92,130, respectively) compared to households of all employed young adults with the same educational attainment (\$114,990 and \$122,310,

respectively). Among young adults with cultural occupations, households of jewelers had notably higher median annual income (\$171,270) compared to households of all employed young adults (\$98,850), while households of tour and travel guides had a lower median annual income (\$61,510).

Overall, the median annual household income of young artists (\$102,900) was higher than that of young non-artist cultural workers (\$94,780). Young artists who had completed a bachelor's degree or a master's degree or higher had higher median annual household incomes (\$112,110 and \$114,840, respectively), compared to their counterparts among young non-artist cultural workers (\$99,680 and \$92,130, respectively). There were no measurable differences in the median household income between households of young artists and young non-artist cultural workers who had not completed a bachelor's degree or a master's degree or higher.



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