

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 with four colored dots (pink, yellow, green, blue) and an arrow points towards the word 'ARTS' in the title.

Domain C

Arts and Cultural Assets



Indicator C.3: **How Many Artists and Other Cultural Workers are Employed in Arts Organizations and Businesses?**

Introduction



Indicator C.3 uses data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to examine artists and other cultural workers by their work classification (that is, whether they are self-employed, work in the private sector, or work in public/government sector) and the industries they are most often employed in. While other indicators in the arts and cultural assets domain draw on industry or business establishment data, Indicator C.3 is based on data from the ACS because it allows better individual-level estimates of respondents' occupations, labor force status, industry, and worker classification. For more information on worker classifications used in this indicator, see *Class of worker definition*.

Class of worker definition

The American Community Survey (ACS) categorizes workers according to the ownership type of the employing organization. The Census Bureau currently uses nine basic classifications of workers: private, for-profit; private, nonprofit; local government; state government; federal government, active duty U.S. Armed Forces or Commissioned Corps; federal government, all other government workers; self-employed, not incorporated; self-employed, incorporated; and working without pay for a family business. These categories have been used in Indicator C.3, though some have been combined for reporting purposes. "Federal government, active duty U.S. Armed Forces or Commissioned Corps" and "federal government, all other government workers" have been combined as "federal government." Meanwhile, "self-employed, not incorporated," and "self-employed, incorporated" have been combined as "self-employed." For more information and detailed definitions of each class of worker, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/employment/industry-occupation/about/class-of-worker.html>.

In this and other indicators in the series, artists and other (non-artist) cultural workers have been defined by their self-reported primary occupation.¹ This indicator includes all artists and other cultural workers who are in the labor force—i.e., either currently employed

in an artist or other cultural worker occupation or unemployed and looking for work in one of these occupation areas. Additional detailed information on the labor force status and employment characteristics of artists from the Current Population Survey, including trends in employment and unemployment rates, individuals holding primary and secondary jobs in the arts, and differences by work intensity, is described in **Indicator A.5: What is the Labor Market Status of Artists and Other Cultural Workers?** Information from the ACS on the earnings of artists and other cultural workers is detailed in **Indicator A.7: What are the Earnings for Artists and Other Cultural Workers?** Finally, **Indicator C.2: Which Industries Employ Artists and Other Cultural Workers?**, based on data from the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), provides a different perspective on major arts and cultural industries that employ artists and other cultural workers.

Artists by worker classification



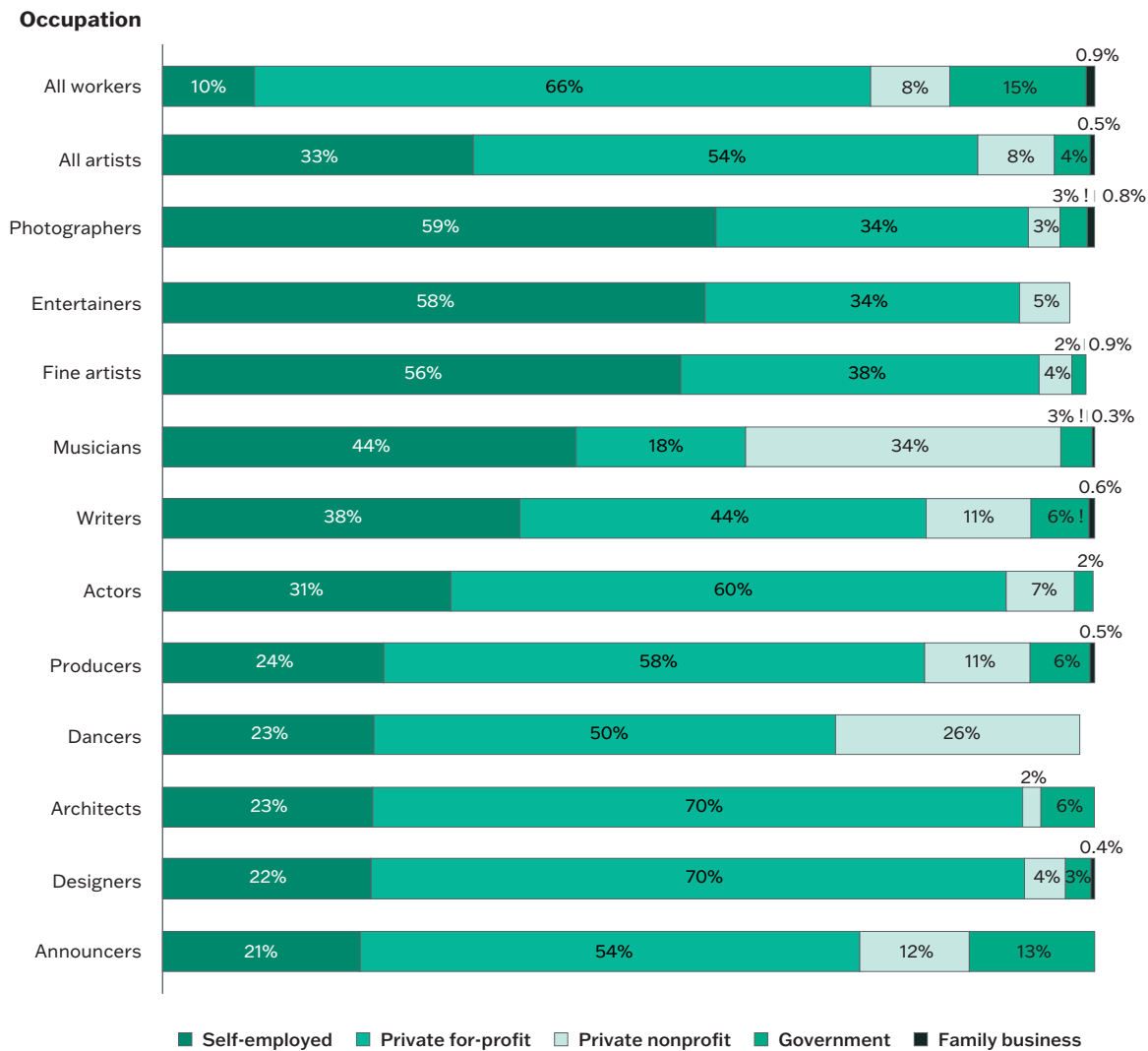
Artists were far more likely to be self-employed than the overall U.S. labor force and less likely to work in the private sector or government (**Figure C3-1**).² In 2022, 54 percent of artists worked for private, for-profit companies or organizations, a rate 12 percentage points lower than that of the total labor force (66 percent).³ Instead, a larger percentage of artists tended to be self-employed (33 percent of all artists) compared to the total labor force (10 percent). The smallest percentages of artists were employed in the public sector/government. In 2022, 1 percent of artists were employed by the federal government, 2 percent by state governments, and 1 percent by local governments (see **Table C3-1**). These percentages were lower than for the total labor force (3 percent of which are federal employees, 4 percent state employees, and 7 percent employees of a local government). Approximately 8 percent of both artists and the total labor force were employed by private, nonprofit organizations.

¹ "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.

² For employed people, class of worker information refers to the person's job during the previous week. For those who worked two or more jobs, the data refer to the job in which the person worked for the greatest number of hours. For people who are unemployed or not in the labor force, but who report having held a job in the last five years, the data refer to their most recent job.

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](#) technical report.

Figure C3-1. Percentage distribution of artists, by artist occupation and class of worker: 2022



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

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. "Family business" includes artists who are working without pay in a for-profit business or farm operated by a relative. "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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and suppression of estimates not meeting statistical standards.

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

There is considerable variation in worker classification across artist occupations.⁴ For example, the majority of photographers (59 percent), entertainers (58 percent), and fine artists (58 percent) were self-employed in 2022, while smaller percentages of workers in these artist occupations were employed by private, for-profit businesses or organizations (34 percent for both photographers and entertainers, 38 percent for fine artists).⁵ These patterns were reversed for other artist occupations. For-profit businesses and organizations were the main employers for architects (70 percent), designers (70 percent), actors (60 percent), producers (58 percent), announcers (54 percent), and dancers (50 percent), while, for each of these artist occupations, only between 21 percent and 31 percent were self-employed.

In many artist occupations, the percentages of artists working in the public sector/government were considerably lower than for the total labor force (15 percent). The occupations with the lowest percentages working in government were fine artists (2 percent), actors (2 percent), designers (3 percent), photographers (3 percent), and musicians (3 percent). Additionally, about 6 percent each of architects, writers, and producers worked for the government, which was about half the rate for the total labor force. The percentage of announcers working for the government (13 percent) was not measurably different from the labor force average.

The numbers of artists in all worker classes increased between 2010 and 2022. The largest increases were among those working at private, for-profit companies or organizations (from 1.1 million to 1.5 million) and those who were self-employed (from 711,000 to 913,000; **Figure C3-2**). While the overall labor force also grew in these categories during the

same period, the percentage increases were different. The overall number of U.S. workers in the private, for-profit sector increased 8 percent, compared with a 35 percent increase for artists in the sector (see **Table C3-1**). Similarly, the number of self-employed workers in the total labor force increased by 15 percent, whereas the number of self-employed artists increased 28 percent. Additionally, the number of U.S. workers in private, nonprofit organizations grew by 22 percent, while the number of artists in this sector increased 24 percent.

More recent changes between 2019 and 2022, reflecting a period before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, show an increase in the total number of artists; the number of artists working for private, for-profit companies or organizations; and the number of artists who were self-employed. Overall, the number of artists increased by 9 percent between 2019 and 2022, with an increase of 5 percent for those working at private, for-profit companies or organizations and 17 percent for those who were self-employed.

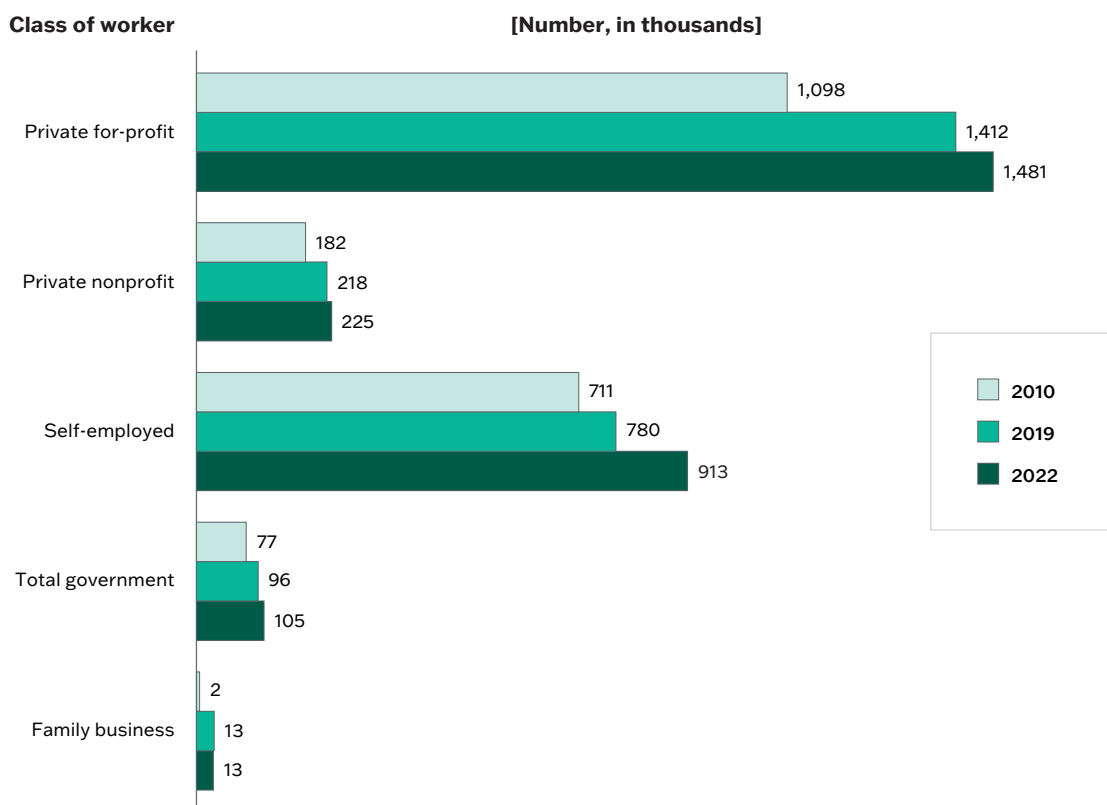
In general, there were no large changes in the percentages of artists in the different worker classes between 2010 and 2022 (see **Table C3-1**). The two measurable changes were small—the percentage of artists working for private, nonprofit organizations decreased from 9 percent of artists in 2010 to 8 percent in 2022, and the percentage working without pay in a family business⁶ increased from 0.1 percent to 0.5 percent. Between 2019 and 2022, the percentage of artists who were self-employed increased from 31 percent to 33 percent, and the percentage working at private, for-profit companies or organizations decreased from 56 percent to 54 percent.

⁴ 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. For more information, see the NEA's 2022 publication [Arts Data Profile #31—Artists in the Workforce: National and State Estimates for 2015–2019](#).

⁵ “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.

⁶ “Family business” includes artists or other cultural workers who are working without pay in a for-profit business or farm operated by a relative.

Figure C3-2. Trends in the number of artists, by class of worker: 2010, 2019, and 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]) unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. "Family business" includes artists who are working without pay in a for-profit business or farm operated by a relative.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010, 2019, and 2022.

Other cultural workers by worker classification

Among other (non-artist) cultural workers in 2022, 50 percent worked for private, for-profit companies or organizations; 22 percent worked for the public sector/government, with the majority employed at the local level (14 percent); 14 percent were self-employed; 14 percent worked for private, nonprofit organizations; and fewer than 1 percent worked without pay in a family business (**Figure C3-3**). A lower percentage of non-artist cultural workers were working at private,

for-profit companies or organizations (50 percent) than were U.S. workers in general (66 percent). In contrast, a higher percentage of cultural workers (14 percent) were working for the private, nonprofit sector than were artists or the total labor force (both at 8 percent). While non-artist cultural workers were also more likely to be self-employed (14 percent), compared with the total labor force (10 percent), their rate was considerably lower than that of artists (33 percent). Cultural workers were more likely to work for the government (22 percent) than the total labor force (15 percent) or artists (4 percent).

As with artists, there were large differences in the percentage distributions of other (non-artist) cultural worker occupations across the class of worker categories.⁷ The percentages of those working at private, for-profit companies or organizations among print binders (87 percent), printing press operators (86 percent), photographic press operators (81 percent), etchers and engravers (81 percent), ushers and lobby attendants (78 percent), and models and demonstrators (74 percent) were higher than among the total labor force (66 percent).⁸ In contrast, the percentages of archivists (19 percent) and librarians (10 percent) working in the private, for-profit sector were more than 40 percentage points lower than for the total labor force. The percentages of tour and travel guides (53 percent); TV and video camera operators and editors (54 percent); broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians (54 percent); and jewelers (54 percent) working for private, for-profit companies or organizations were also lower than the corresponding share of the total labor force.

By contrast, the percentage of other (non-artist) cultural workers working for private, nonprofit organizations (14 percent) was higher than the share of the total labor force (8 percent). Among non-artist cultural workers, archivists (39 percent), librarians (20 percent), and tour and travel guides (15 percent) had the highest shares of workers at private, non-profit companies or organizations. Editors (13 percent), ushers and lobby attendants (12 percent), and sound

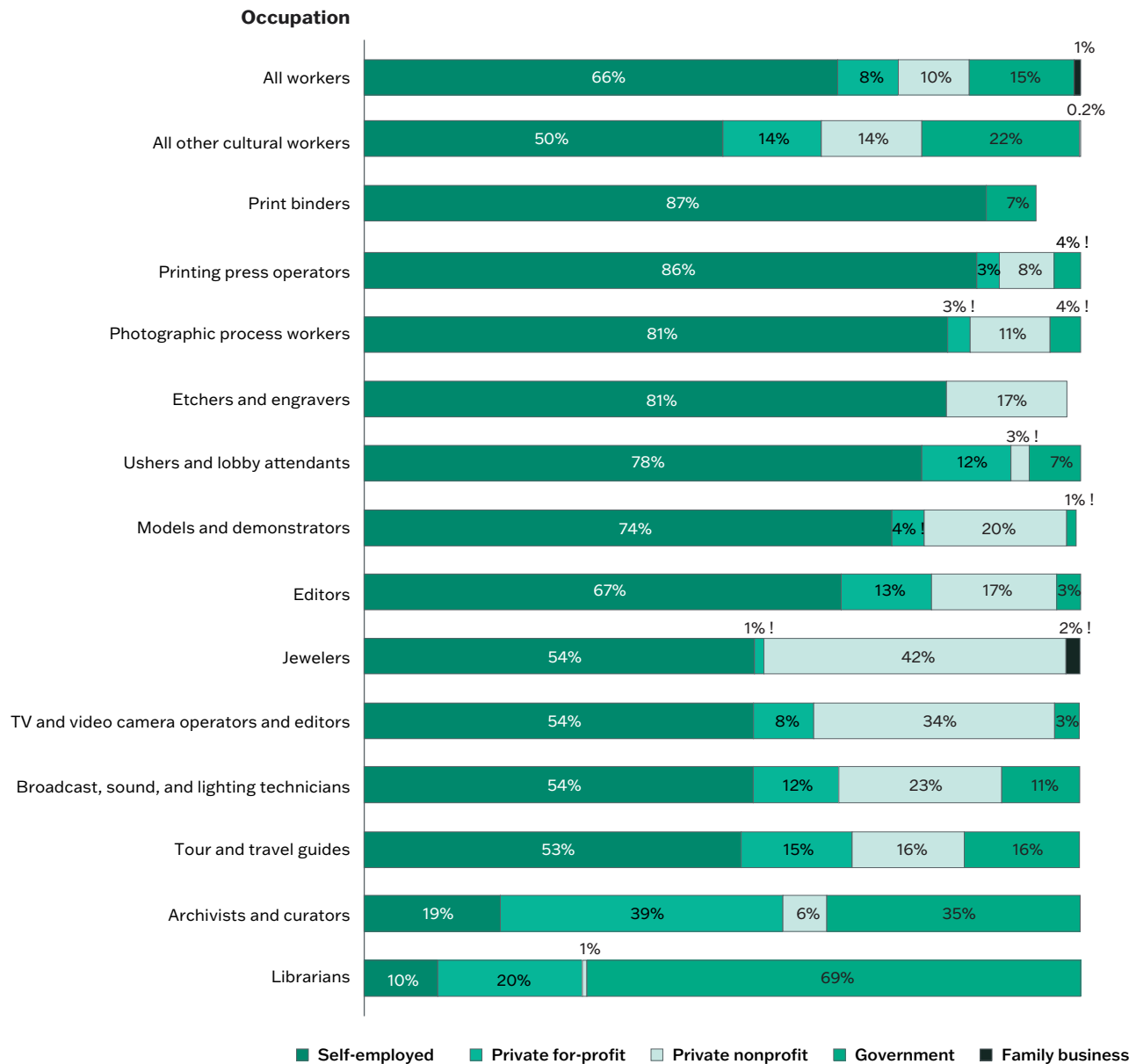
and lighting technicians (12 percent) also worked for private, nonprofit organizations at higher rates than of U.S. workers overall. In contrast, jewelers (1 percent), photographic process workers (3 percent), printing press operators (3 percent), and models and demonstrators (4 percent) were less likely than the total labor force to work for private, nonprofit organizations.

The cultural worker occupations with the largest differences in self-employment rates (gaps of 10 percentage points or more)—relative to the total labor force—included jewelers (42 percent); TV and video camera operators and editors (34 percent); broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians (23 percent); and models and demonstrators (20 percent). The relatively high percentage of other (non-artist) cultural workers employed by governments (22 percent) was primarily driven by the high rates for librarians (69 percent) and archivists (35 percent). Archivists had higher rates of government employment at the federal, state, and local levels than did the total labor force, while the rates for librarians were higher than the total labor force only at the state and local levels. About half (52 percent) of librarians worked for local governments. Government employment percentages for cultural worker occupations besides archivists and librarians were either lower than average for the total labor force or not measurable due to data limitations.

⁷ Other cultural workers, also called non-artist cultural workers or simply cultural workers, are individuals whose primary occupation supports the arts but is not included within artist-related occupations. Indicator C.3 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.

⁸ “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.

Figure C3-3. Percentage distribution of other cultural workers, by cultural worker occupation and class of worker: 2022



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

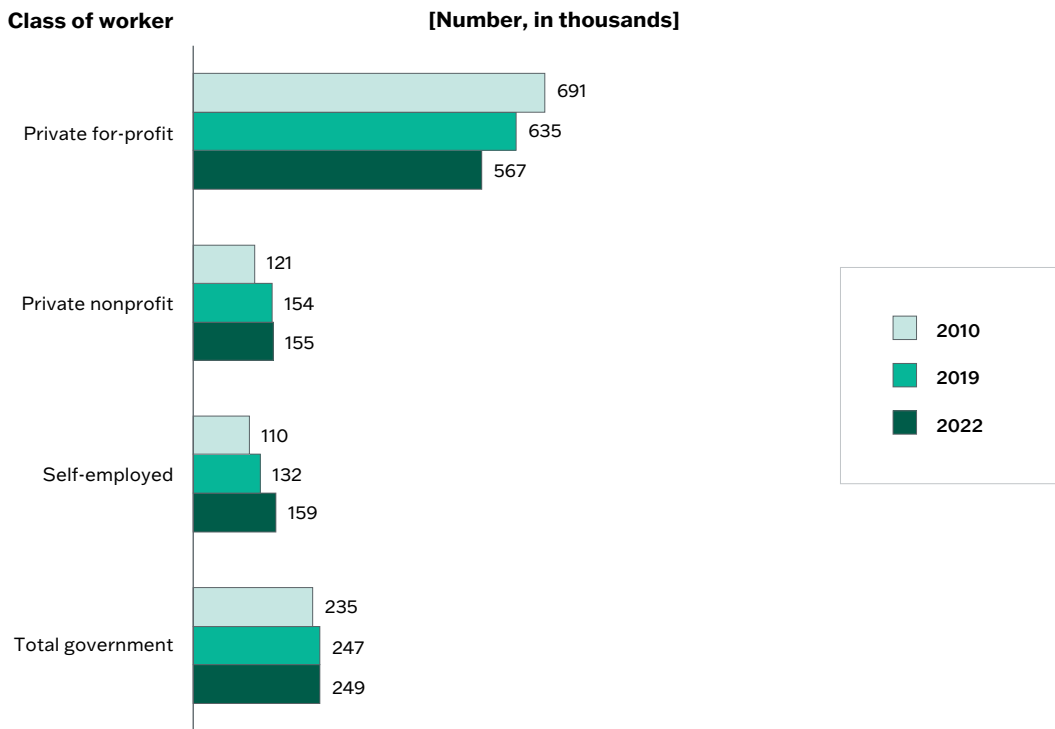
NOTE: Other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed (regardless of work intensity [employed full time, year round or part time and/or part year] and class of worker [private or wage salary, government, or self-employed]) in a cultural worker occupation or unemployed and looking for work in a cultural worker occupation. "Family business" includes other cultural workers who are working without pay in a for-profit business or farm operated by a relative. "Archivists and curators" include archivists, curators, and museum technicians. "Broadcast, sound, and lighting technicians" include broadcast, sound, and lighting 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 binding 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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and suppression of estimates not meeting statistical standards.

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

The total number of other (non-artist) cultural workers in 2022 (1.1 million) was not measurably different from the number in 2010 (1.2 million; see [Table C3-1](#)). However, there were changes in the number of cultural workers by class of worker during this period. The number of cultural workers at private, for-profit organizations decreased from 691,000 in 2010 to 567,000 in 2022 ([Figure C3-4](#)). In contrast, the number of cultural workers who were self-employed increased (from 110,000 in 2010 to 159,000 in 2022), as did the number working at private, nonprofit organizations (from 121,000 to 155,000) or in local government (from 135,000 to 157,000). More recent changes between 2019 and 2022, reflecting a period before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, show the number of cultural workers decreased at private, for-profit organizations (from 635,000 to 567,000) and at state governments (from 81,000 to 72,000), while the number of self-employed cultural workers increased (from 132,000 to 159,000; [Figure C3-4](#)).

There were also changes in the distribution of other (non-artist) cultural workers by class of worker between 2010 and 2020 (see [Table C3-1](#)). The percentage of cultural workers working for private, for-profit companies or organizations decreased from 60 percent in 2010 to 50 percent in 2022, while the share working in the private, nonprofit sector increased from 10 percent to 14 percent, the share of those self-employed rose from 10 percent to 14 percent, and the share working for local governments rose from 12 percent to 14 percent during the same period. Between 2019 and 2022, the percentage of cultural workers working in private, for-profit businesses decreased from 54 percent to 50 percent, the percentage of self-employed cultural workers increased from 11 percent to 14 percent, and the percentage working for local governments grew from 12 percent to 14 percent.

Figure C3-4. Trends in the number of other cultural workers, by class of worker: 2010, 2019, and 2022



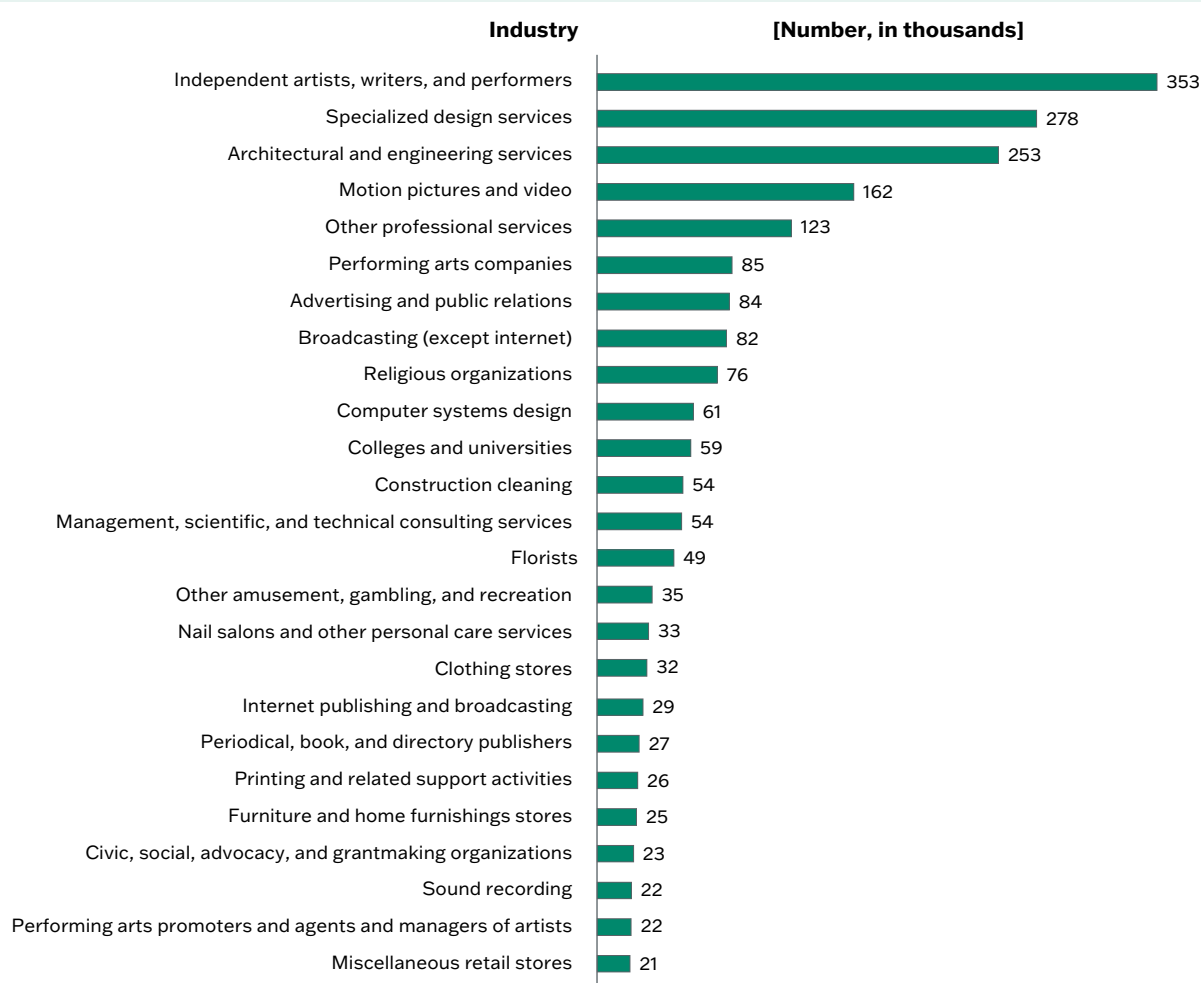
NOTE: Other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed (regardless of work intensity [employed full time, year round or part time and/or part year] and class of worker [private or wage salary, government, or self-employed]) in a cultural worker occupation or unemployed and looking for work in a cultural worker occupation. Separate data for other cultural workers working without pay in a for-profit business or farm operated by a relative are not available.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010, 2019, and 2022.

Top industries employing artists

Another way of looking at the artist labor force is to consider the industries in which they work. As might be expected given the high percentage of artists who are self-employed, the industry with the highest number of artists in 2022 was independent artists, writers, and performers, which employed about 353,000 artists, or 13 percent of all 2.7 million artists (Figure C3-5). Other industries employing more than

100,000 artists in 2022 included specialized design services (278,000); architectural and engineering services (253,000); motion picture and video (162,000); and other professional, scientific, and technical services (123,000).⁹ Among these largest categories between 2019 and 2022, there were increases in the number of artists working as independent artists, writers, and performers (from 295,000 to 353,000), as well as for artists in architectural and engineering services (from 232,000 to 253,000) and motion pictures and video (from 129,000 to 162,000; see Table C3-4).

Figure C3-5. Industries employing the largest number of artists: 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. "Advertising and public relations" include advertising, public relations, and related services. "Architectural and engineering services" include architectural, engineering, and related services. "Civic, social, advocacy, and grantmaking organizations" include civic, social, and advocacy organizations, as well as grantmaking and giving services. "Colleges and universities" include colleges, universities, and professional schools, including junior colleges. "Computer systems design" includes computer systems design and related services. "Construction cleaning" includes services related to the cleaning of buildings and dwellings during or immediately after construction. "Internet publishing and broadcasting" includes internet publishing and broadcasting and web search portals. "Other professional, scientific, and technical services" include other professional, scientific, and technical services.

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

⁹ "Architectural and engineering services" include architectural, engineering, and related services.

Artist employment across industries can also be examined in terms of the proportion of workers in each industry who are artists. There were some similarities between the list of industries employing higher numbers of artists and those for which artists make up the largest percentage of workers. For example, the two industries with the highest number of artists were also the two industries for which artists made up the largest percentages of workers—independent artists, writers, and performers (84 percent of these workers were artists) and specialized design services (72 percent; see [Table C3-3](#)). But there were also notable differences. The next three industries with the highest percentages of workers who were artists were performing arts companies (50 percent), florists (48 percent), and sound recording (31 percent). It is important to note that many industries employed substantial numbers of artists in 2022, though the overall proportions of artists in their workforces were relatively small. For example, colleges and universities employed 59,000 artists in 2022, but this sum totaled only 1 percent of their total workers.¹⁰ There were no measurable changes in the proportions of artists among all workers in the top five industries between 2019 and 2022.

Top industries employing other cultural workers

The industry with the highest number of other (non-artist) cultural workers in 2022 was motion pictures and video, which employed about 121,000 cultural workers, or 11 percent of all 1.1 million cultural workers ([Figure C3-6](#)). Other industries employing more than 50,000 cultural

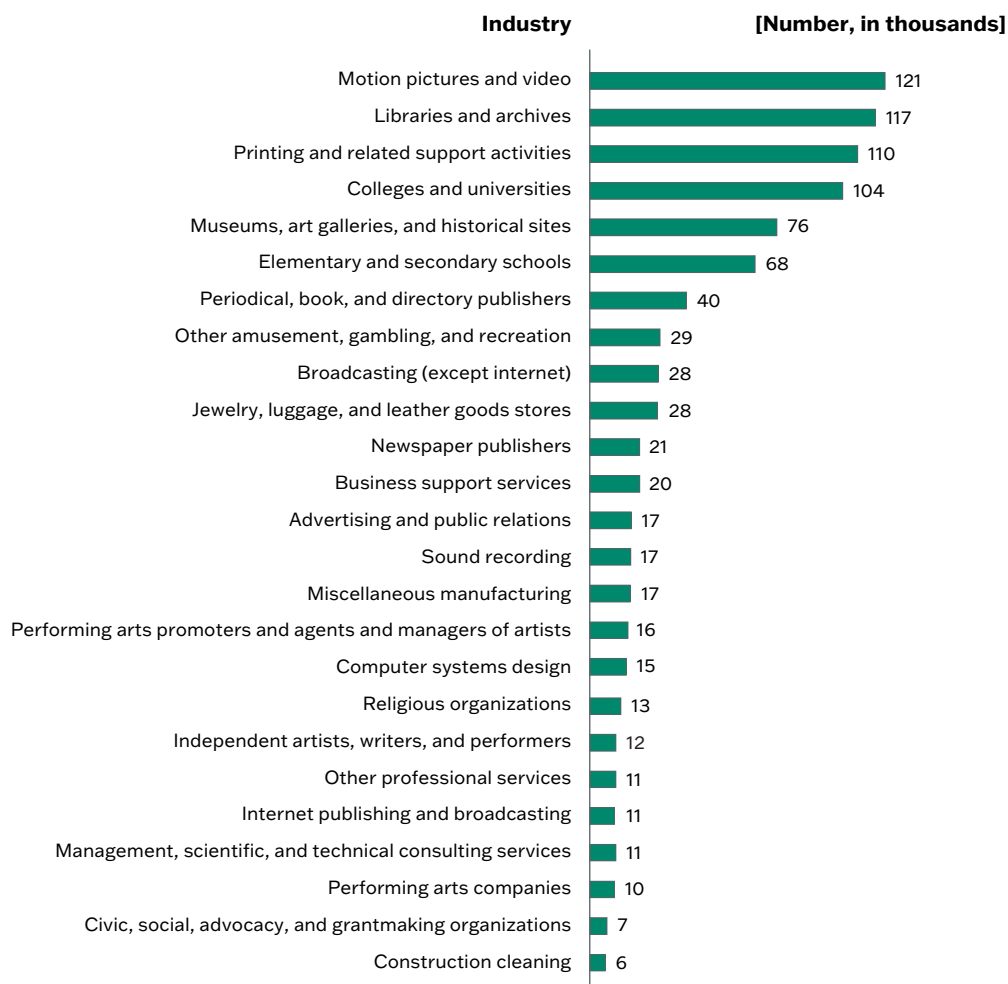
workers in 2022 included libraries and archives (117,000); printing and related support activities (110,000); colleges and universities (104,000); museums, art galleries, and historical sites (76,000); and elementary and secondary schools (68,000).¹¹ Between 2019 and 2022, there were no measurable changes in the number of cultural workers in any of these industries, except printing and related support activities, where the number of cultural workers decreased from 141,000 to 110,000.

While many of the industries with the highest proportion of other (non-artist) cultural workers in their workforce were also the industries with the highest number of cultural workers overall, such as libraries and archives (45 percent of workers were cultural workers) and printing and related support activities (25 percent), this was not always the case (see [Table C3-3](#)). After libraries and archives and printing and related support activities, the industries with the highest percentage of cultural workers were sound recording (24 percent); motion pictures and video (21 percent); periodical, book, and directory publishers (21 percent); newspaper publishers (18 percent); and scenic and sightseeing transportation (18 percent). As noted for artists, even though cultural workers accounted for small percentages of industry employment, there were some industries that employed large numbers of cultural workers. For example, elementary and secondary schools employed relatively large numbers of cultural workers (68,000), but fewer than 1 percent of elementary and secondary school workers were cultural workers. There were no measurable changes in the percentage of all workers who were cultural workers in the top five industries between 2019 and 2022.

¹⁰ “Colleges and universities” include colleges, universities, and professional schools, including junior colleges.

¹¹ “Museums, art galleries, and historical sites” include museums, art galleries, historical sites, and similar institutions.

Figure C3-6. Industries employing the largest number of other cultural workers: 2022



NOTE: Other cultural workers in the labor force are individuals currently employed in a 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 a cultural worker occupation. "Advertising and public relations" includes advertising, public relations, and related services. "Architectural and engineering services" include architectural, engineering, and related services. "Civic, social, advocacy, and grantmaking organizations" include civic, social, and advocacy organizations, as well as grantmaking and giving services. "Colleges and universities" include colleges, universities, and professional schools, including junior colleges. "Computer systems design" includes computer systems design and related services. "Construction cleaning" includes services related to the cleaning of buildings and dwellings during or immediately after construction. "Internet publishing and broadcasting" includes internet publishing and broadcasting and web search portals. "Museums, art galleries, and historical sites" include museums, art galleries, historical sites, and similar institutions. "Other professional services" include other professional, scientific, and technical services.

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

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