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Carol Ross Barney, Chicago Riverwalk and Expansion

ISSUE BRIEF

Chicago's artist labor force: a comparative perspective

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Members of Illinois' artist labor force—an estimated 89,280 workers—reside throughout the state, yet the sheer size and concentration of this labor force residing in the City of Chicago warrants a closer look. This brief extends the examination of the Illinois artist labor force provided in [“The Artist Labor Force: a statistical look at Illinois in the context of the U.S.”](#) (June 2022)¹ by providing statistics on the artist labor force residing in the City of Chicago in a comparative perspective with ten other U.S. cities.²



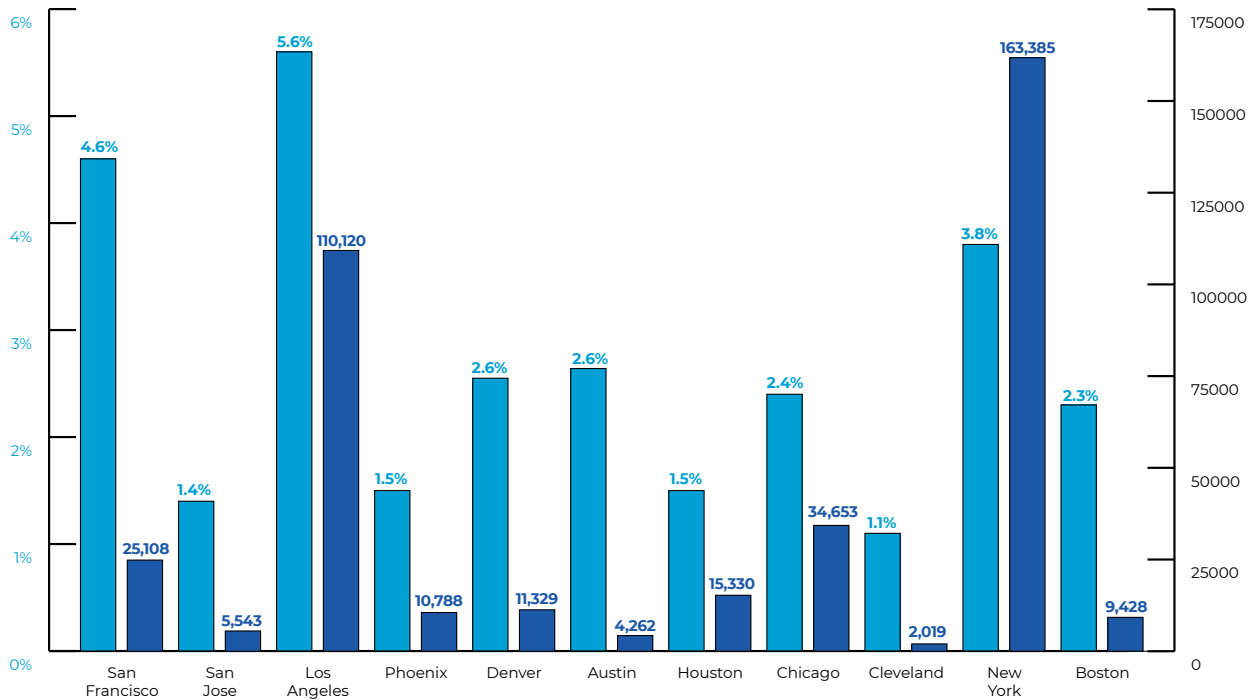
Data

This brief uses the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) data³ spanning 2016–2020, which enables analyses of the artist labor force⁴ based on socio-demographic and employment characteristics. The ACS 5-year data enable more granular analyses focused on smaller populations and smaller geographic regions, which are distinct characteristics of the data that enable the analyses within this brief. To define the artist labor force, Census Occupation Codes that align with occupation titles utilized by the National Endowment for the Arts to study artists' employment are utilized and are detailed in the Technical Appendix. In order to define each city's geography, the U.S. Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) stemming from the 2010 Census are used⁵ and are listed in the Technical Appendix. Recognizing that bounds of cultural and artistic ecosystems are not necessarily bound by geographic borders, using city-based geographies enables an empirical basis for providing comparative perspectives on the Chicago artistic labor force.

Size & Density

The City of Chicago's artist labor force—those who reside within the city—is estimated to be 34,653 workers, representing about 2.4% of the city's labor force (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Estimated size of the artist labor force & its portion of the total civilian labor force, by city



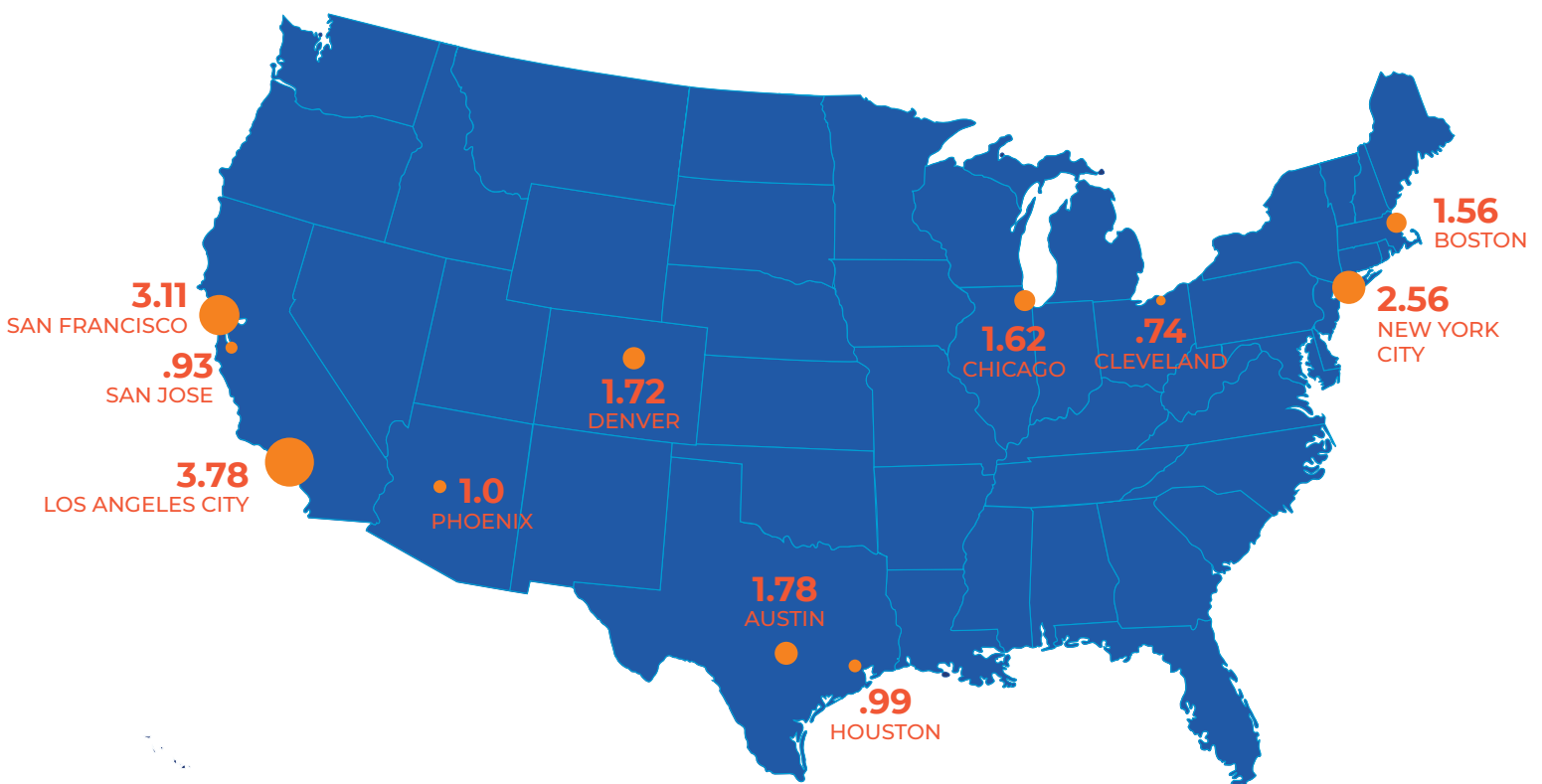
The artist labor force comprises the largest portions of the labor force residing in Los Angeles (5.6%), San Francisco (4.6%), and New York City (3.8%). Whereas the size of the artist labor force in each New York City and Los Angeles is also relatively larger than in other cities, the size of the artist labor force in San Francisco—an estimated 25,108 workers—is relatively smaller than the size of the artist labor force in Chicago, an estimated 34,653 workers.

Similar to Chicago, the artist labor force comprises close to 2.5% of the labor force in each Denver, Austin, and Boston. In each San Jose, Phoenix, Houston, and Cleveland, the artist labor force comprises between an estimated 1.1% to 1.5%.

Illustrating the density of the artist labor force in each city, Figure 2 shows the location quotient for each city's artist labor force, which compares the portion of the labor force that artists make up in each city to the portion of the labor force that artists make up in the U.S. as a whole. Chicago's artist labor force location quotient is 1.62; it has approximately 1.6 times the density of artists as the U.S. as whole. Denver, Austin, and Boston are estimated to have a density of artists in the city's labor force close to that of Chicago.

Los Angeles and San Francisco have the greatest density of artists, with location quotients of 3.78 and 3.11 respectively; followed by New York City with a location quotient of 2.56. San Jose, Phoenix, and Houston each have estimated location quotients close to 1.0, and therefore have a density of artists in their labor forces similar to that of the U.S. as a whole. The density of artists within Cleveland's labor force is estimated to be notably lower than that of the U.S. (location quotient estimate = .74).

Figure 2. Location Quotient for the Artist Labor Force, by city



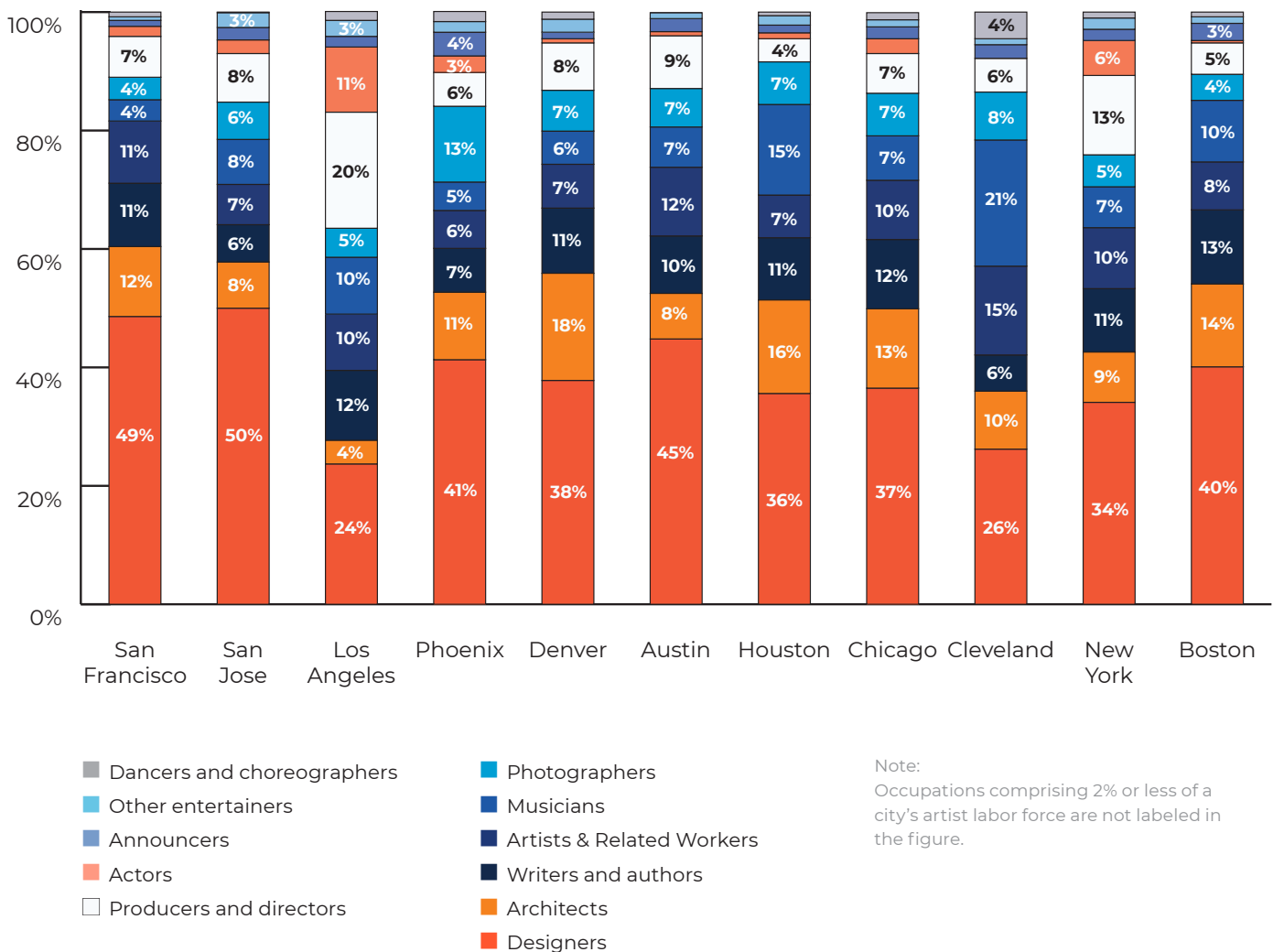
Composition

For empirical insights on the composition of the artist labor force in each city, the employment characteristics and the demographics of the individuals in each city's artist labor force are examined.

Chicago's artist labor is largely designers, estimated to comprise 37% of the city's labor force (Figure 3). Designers comprise the largest portion of each city's artist labor force, approximately half of the artist labor force in each San Francisco and San Jose, and with smaller—though still the largest—portions nearing a quarter of the labor force in each Los Angeles and Cleveland.

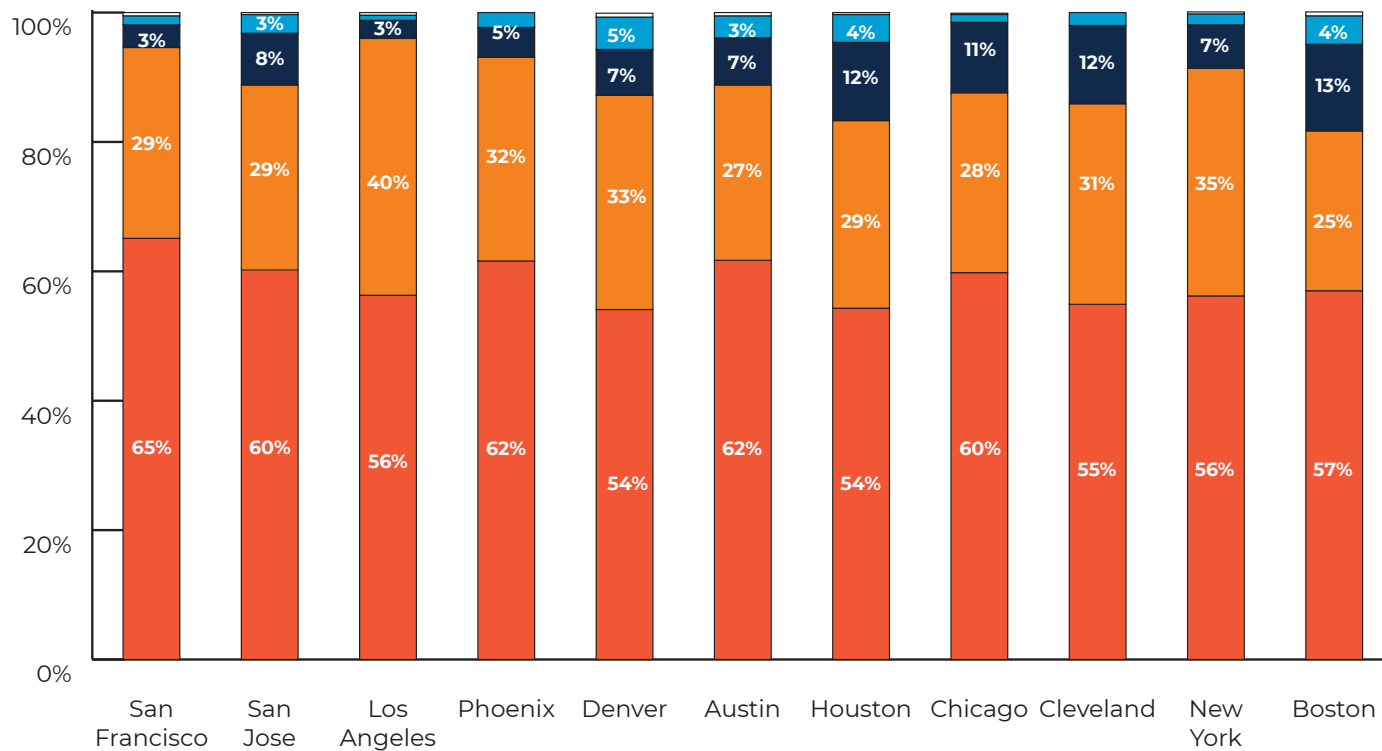
Chicago's artist labor force is also composed of considerable portions of architects (13%), writers and authors (12%), and artists and related workers (10%), which includes occupations such as fine artists, animators, sculptors, and creative directors.

Figure 3. Composition of the Artist Labor Force - Occupation



The majority of the Chicago artist labor force (60%), like that of the other cities examined, works in the for-profit sector (Figure 4). A large portion of Chicago's artist labor force (28%) is self-employed.

Figure 4. Composition of the Artist Labor Force - Sector



- Work, No Pay
- Government
- Non Profit
- Self-Employed
- For Profit

Note:
Sectors comprising 2% or less of a city's artist labor force are not labeled in the figure.

Table 1 provides the estimated demographic composition of each city’s artist labor force. Chicago’s labor force is largely White, male, and well-educated. An estimated 70% of Chicago’s artist labor force is White, Non-Hispanic; 52% male; and 82% has earned a bachelor’s degree, graduate or professional degree.

Table 1. Demographic Composition of the Artist Labor Force

	San Francisco	San Jose	Los Angeles	Phoenix	Denver	Austin	Houston	Chicago	Cleveland	New York	Boston	
Race & Ethnicity												
White	62.5%	45.7%	61.1%	73.9%	81.3%	68.3%	42.5%	69.3%	69.7%	64.2%	62.4%	
Black or African American	1.1%	5.3%	8.3%	4.5%	4.6%	6.6%	18.5%	8.7%	17.3%	7.5%	8.1%	
Hispanic	8.1%	16.9%	14.9%	17.9%	9.7%	16.5%	25.9%	10.9%	9.1%	12.7%	13.2%	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.1%		0.2%	0.2%				0.1%		0.2%	0.5%	
Asian	22.7%	29.9%	10.6%	2.3%	1.6%	6.3%	9.7%	7.6%	0.9%	11.8%	12.1%	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		0.1%	0.1%							0.4%	0.3%	
Other race	0.4%		0.3%			0.8%	0.9%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	
Two or more races	5.2%	2.2%	4.6%	1.3%	3.0%	1.6%	2.5%	3.2%	2.7%	3.4%	3.2%	
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Gender												
Male	51.8%	55.3%	57.2%	55.1%	49.6%	49.2%	58.6%	51.8%	59.2%	51.2%	44.7%	
Female	48.2%	44.7%	42.8%	44.9%	50.4%	50.8%	41.4%	48.2%	40.8%	48.8%	55.3%	
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Educational Attainment												
High School or less	5.4%	9.9%	8.8%	17.0%	5.5%	1.6%	14.0%	5.9%	9.9%	6.6%	8.6%	
Associates degree or some college	10.4%	23.0%	22.9%	28.3%	17.2%	21.1%	23.8%	12.6%	37.2%	12.7%	14.2%	
Bachelor degree	58.8%	48.6%	53.7%	42.7%	54.4%	51.9%	40.6%	57.1%	40.9%	56.0%	51.6%	
Graduate or professional degree	25.5%	18.5%	14.7%	12.0%	22.8%	25.3%	21.7%	24.4%	12.0%	24.7%	25.6%	
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Age												
Average Age	39.4	42.4	39.1	42.2	39.2	36.3	40.1	37.4	39.7	39.8	36.6	

Earnings

The average annual earnings for members of Chicago's artist labor force is an estimated \$58,127 (Figure 5). On average, the artist labor force's annual earnings in the three cities in California—San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles—and in New York are greater than in Chicago. Further consideration of earnings across regions should account for cost of living differences.

Figure 5. Artist Labor Force Average Annual Earnings, by city⁶

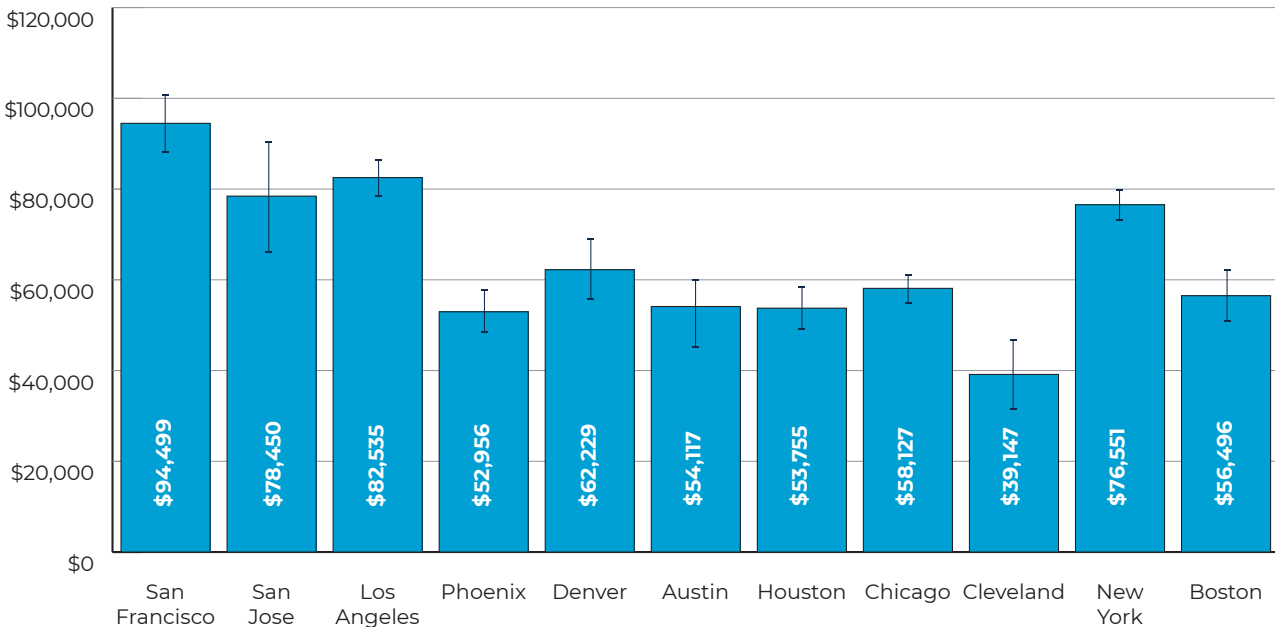
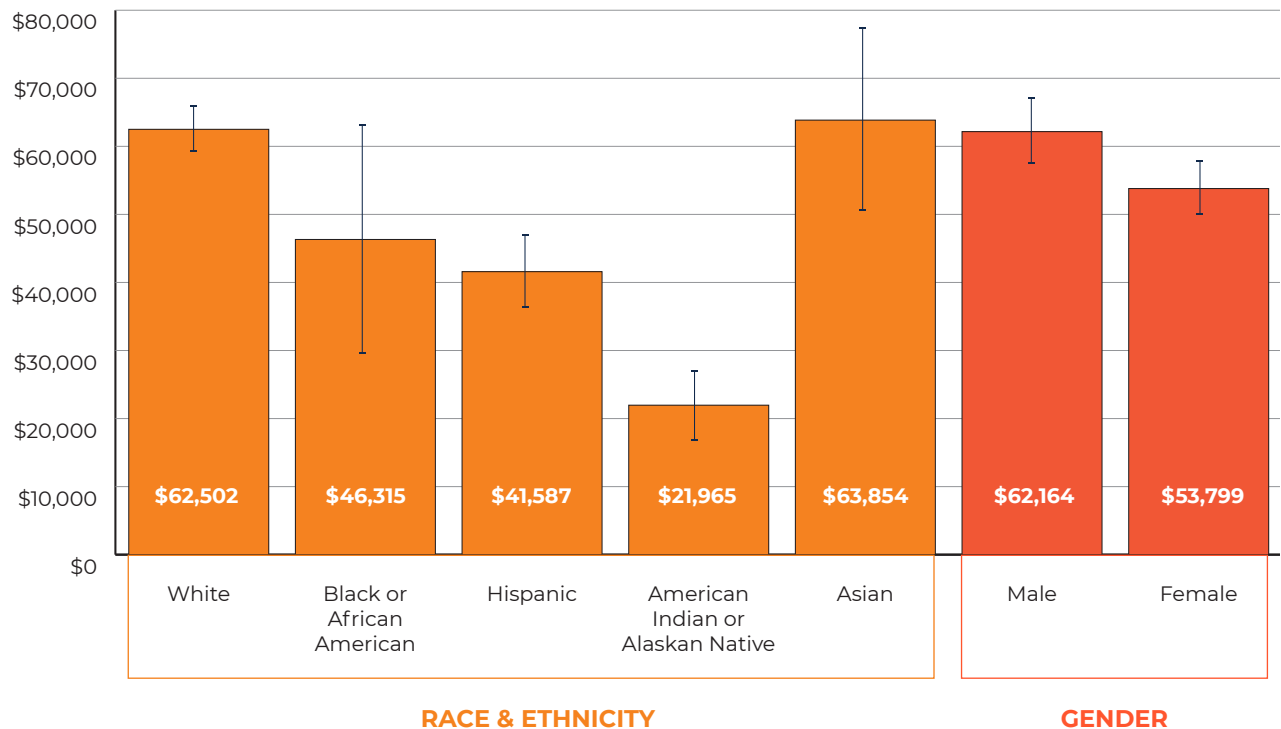


Figure 6 provides a closer look at Chicago’s artist labor force, illustrating differences in average annual earnings by race and ethnicity, and by gender. There are significant differences between the average annual earnings of each White and Asian workers earning significantly more, annually on average, than each Hispanic workers and American Indian or Alaskan Native workers in the artist labor force. These differences persist even after controlling for additional influences on earnings, including gender, occupation, usual hours worked per week, sector of work, and educational attainment. The significant difference in average annual earnings also persists between male and female workers—even after controlling for the influences of these additional factors on earnings as well as race and ethnicity, female workers earn about \$5,150 less than male workers in Chicago’s artist labor force.

Figure 6. Artist Labor Force Average Annual Earnings - Chicago



Acknowledgements

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Technical Appendix

Occupation Codes used to define the artist labor force:

2018 Census Occupational Code	Occupation Title	Presented in Charts as
2700	Actors	Actors
2755	Disk jockeys, except radio	Announcers
2805	Broadcast Announcers and radio disk jockeys	
2865	Media and communications workers, all others	
1305	Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	Architects
1306	Landscape Architects	
2600	Artists and related Workers	Artists and related Workers
2740	Dancers and Choreographers	Dancers and Choreographers
2631	Commercial and Industrial Designers	Designers
2632	Fashion Designers	
2633	Floral Designers	
2634	Graphic Designers	
2635	Interior Designers	
2636	Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	
2640	Other Designers	
2751	Music Directors and Composers	Musicians
2752	Musicians and Singers	
2910	Photographers	Photographers
2710	Producers and Directors	Producers and Directors
2850	Writers and Authors	Writers and Authors
2770	Entertainers and Performers, Sports and related Workers, all Others	Other entertainers and performers, etc.

For more about the NEA’s selected artist occupations, see: <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/arts-data-profile-series/adp-1/artists-occupations>; https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists_and_Other_Cultural_Workers.pdf; and <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/arts-data-profile-series/adp-31/data-tables>.

PUMAs used to define each city:

	San Francisco	San Jose	Los Angeles	Phoenix	Denver	Austin	Houston	Chicago	Cleveland	New York	Boston		
	7501	8509	3705	0113	0812	5302	4601	3501	0905	3701	3903	4018	3301
	7502	8510	3706	0114	0813	5303	4602	3502	0906	3702	4001	4018	3302
	7503	8511	3708	0115	0814	5304	4603	3503	0908	3703	4002	4101	3303
	7504	8512	3721	0116	0815	5305	4604	3504		3704	4003	4102	3304
	7505	8513	3722	0117	0816	5306	4607	3520		3705	4004	4103	3305
	7506	8514	3723	0118		5307	4608	3521		3706	4005	4104	
	7507		3724	0119		5308	4609	3522		3707	4006	4105	
			3725	0120			4610	3523		3708	4007	4106	
			3727	0122			4611	3524		3709	4008	4107	
			3729	0123			4614	3525		3710	4009	4108	
			3730	0125			4616	3526		3801	4010	4109	
			3732	0128			4617	3527		3802	4011	4110	
			3733				4618	3528		3803	4012	4111	
			3734				4635	3529		3804	4013	4112	
			3735				4636	3530		3805	4014	4113	
			3744				4637	3531		3806	4014	4114	
			3745				4638	3532		3807	4015		
			3746							3808	4015		
			3747							3809	4016		
			3750							3810	4017		
			3751							3901	4017		
										3902	4017		

PUMAs
(2010
Census
definitions)

Endnotes

- 1 Direct report link: <https://web.faa.illinois.edu/app/uploads/sites/10/2022/08/Issue-Brief-2-Revised-July.pdf>
- 2 The cities for comparison were selected in conversation with Arts Alliance Illinois and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.
- 3 <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html>
- 4 The ACS measures labor force as those who reside in the geographic area of interest.
- 5 <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/pumas.html>;
<https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-maps/2010/geo/2010-pumas.html>
- 6 Error bars represent the estimated 95%-confidence interval for the point estimate.
- 7 Regression results are available upon request.