



COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on The Arts

Research Update: January 19, 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on America's arts sector. While employment conditions improve for artists and creative workers, the arts are recovering slower than other industries and COVID continues to disrupt in-person programming. This is a summary of research by Americans for the Arts and others on the human and financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts. **Data updates are in yellow.**

1. Artist Employment is Recovering, But Slower Than the Nation's Economy

- "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation" jobs dropped from 2.5 million to 1.2 million between February and April 2020 (-53%). As of **December 2021**, arts jobs have rebounded to 2.24 million. Positive news, but still down (-11%) since pre-pandemic ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)).
- Johns Hopkins University reports that, as of **December 2021**, the percentage of [job losses at nonprofit arts organizations](#) remains more than 3 times worse than the average of all nonprofits (-12.5% vs. -3.7%).
- The U.S. Census Bureau's [Small Business Pulse Survey](#) reports that "arts, entertainment, and recreation" businesses are among the most likely to take longer than 6 months to recover from the pandemic.

2. Rebound in Arts Attendance

- 63% of arts attendees are already attending in-person programs as of **December 2021**—up from 38% in September and 17% in April 2021—with 37% expecting to do so in January 2022 or beyond. ([AMS Audience Outlook Monitor](#))

3. The Pandemic's Impact on Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations and their Audiences

As of July 2021, financial losses to the nation's nonprofit arts and culture organizations were an estimated **\$17.97 billion**. 99% of producing and presenting organizations cancelled events during the pandemic—a **loss of 557 million ticketed admissions** impacting both arts organizations and audiences. Additionally, local area businesses—restaurants, lodging, retail, and parking—were severely impacted by cancelled arts and culture events with a loss of \$17.6 billion in audience ancillary spending. Local government revenue losses were \$6.0 billion and 1.03 million jobs were negatively affected because of cancelled events. **As of July 2021:**

- **BIPOC organizations** were more likely to report that they lack the financial resources needed to return to in-person programming than non-BIPOC organizations (55% vs. 38%).
- 77% of organizations were currently delivering virtual content/programming. Looking ahead, 29% will improve their online content, post-pandemic, while 18% expect to hold steady. 45% plan to reduce their virtual presence and 8% intend to discontinue it altogether.

4. The Pandemic's Impact on Artist & Creative Workers

Artists/creatives were—and remain—among the most severely affected segment of the nation's workforce.

- At the height of the pandemic in 2020, 63% experienced unemployment and 95% lost creative income.
- BIPOC artists had higher rates of unemployment than white artists in 2020 due to the pandemic (69% vs. 60%) and lost a larger percentage of their creative income (61% vs. 56%).
- 37% of artists were unable to access or afford food at some point during the pandemic and 58% did not visit a medical professional due to an inability to pay.

5. The Economic Importance of Getting Artists and Creative Workers Back to Work

- The arts are a formidable industry in the U.S. Prior to the pandemic, the nation's arts and culture sector (nonprofit, commercial, education) was a **\$919.7 billion industry** that supported **5.2 million jobs** and represented **4.3% of the nation's economy** in 2019. ([U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#))
- The arts industry is an economic catalyst, an industry that accelerates economic recovery. A growth in arts employment has a positive and causal effect on overall employment. ([Indiana University](#))