

The Chicago Arts Census is a cross-discipline data collection effort created by and with the art workers of Chicago.

About

The Chicago Arts Census was built to amplify our voices as art workers in Chicago. We do this by collecting, mapping, and visualizing data sets to better illuminate the reality of our living and working conditions. The Census aims to act as a catalyst for change, empowering art workers to advocate for better working conditions, contributing to policy discussions, influencing funding priorities, and creating new opportunities for collaboration across the arts sectors.

The data collected from the Chicago Arts Census is being translated into a series of maps and visualizations, an interactive website, thematic publications, and public programs that demonstrate the interwoven and dependent relationships that make up Chicago's art ecosystem.

Process At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Arts Census organizers wondered what would be useful to artists and arts workers in a moment of crisis. Rather than make assumptions, they decided to develop surveys and invite arts workers to describe their living and working conditions along with their dreams and challenges.

To help guide this process and make space for a broad range of feedback, a steering committee

and a research and development committee were formed. These committee members were paid for their time and contributions throughout this process. More than 30 reviewers participated in three stages of peer review held before releasing the survey to the public.

Organizers The Chicago Arts Census is stewarded by Lead Organizers: Kate Bowen, Alden Burke, Stephanie Koch, and Adia Sykes. The Census has also been supported by Project Managers: Tiffany Johnson (2021-2023) and Anthony Stepter (2023-Present). For a full list of contributors, please visit our website.

Participant Voices

“My biggest support system is my network of friends, many of whom I work and collaborate with. Our relationships are built on a foundation of trust, respect, support, and reciprocity.”

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

“Not having a steady paying job makes my day-to-day living feel precarious. All of my writing/editing work is non-contracted and could disappear at any moment...My work in the arts feels important to me and impactful, though the paltry pay makes it feel very unsustainable.”

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

“One of the most challenging aspects of working in the arts is the lack of financial stability, not just here and there but over time. I feel like I've slipped further and further behind my peers who either work in other fields or have opted to sideline their artistic practice for full-time work. I find it really frustrating that there is so little financial support for individual artists in Chicago. I think often about leaving the area for other places.”

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

CONNECT

Are you interested in partnering with the Chicago Arts Census? Have an idea or suggestion you would like to share? Contact us at census@acreresidency.org

For more information, visit chicagoartscensus.com to sign up for updates, or follow [@chicagoartscensus](https://twitter.com/chicagoartscensus) on social media.

1. DATA STRUCTURE



1254 respondents



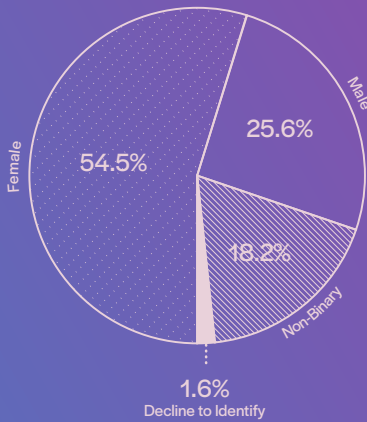
210 Questions



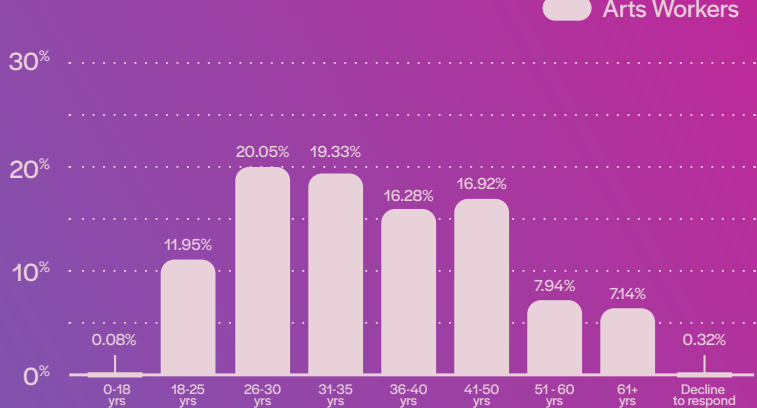
Open to all disciplines of artists and arts workers

2. DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

a. GENDER IDENTITY



b. AGE RANGE



c. RACE/ETHNICITY*

White	61.03%
Multiracial	11.93%
Black/African-American	9.23%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	6.62%
Asian	5.56%
Self-Identify	2.45%
Decline to identify	2.04%
Indigenous American/First Nations	0.9%
Middle-Eastern/North African	0.25%

* Respondents who selected more than one option are represented on this chart within the Multiracial category. All other figures represent respondents who selected only one option

KEY FINDING

Over 70% of all the arts workers we surveyed earned less than \$50,000 during each of the years we collected data (2019, 2020, 2021). More than twice as many respondents surveyed carried student loan debt compared to those with a mortgage.

KEY FINDING

95% of our respondents reported that they receive compensation for their work in the arts, yet only 55% said they usually receive payment in a timely manner and a full 10% said they are NEVER paid on time.

4. INCOME / FINANCES

30% have \$75,000 or more in debt

95% receive compensation for work in the arts

OVER 70% respondents reported earning less than \$50K

KEY FINDING

42% of arts workers said that they are rarely or never paid appropriately for their labor.

3. DISABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY



20% of our survey respondents identify as deaf or disabled.*



52% of arts workers with a disability said they face barriers to participation



43% of disabled arts workers said they face barriers to presenting their work

* According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 13% of the US population identify as having a disability.

KEY FINDING

When asked to share how personal finances impact their artistic practice or work in the arts, 74% said they felt they had limited or no opportunities for career growth, 26% reported working more than one job at a time, and 14% reported that they cannot make ends meet. Additionally, only 1/3 of respondents reported that they can "take time off without experiencing negative consequences."