



# COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on The Arts

## Research Update: July 13, 2021

The coronavirus has had a devastating impact on America's arts sector. Even as arts organizations begin to reopen, artists and creative workers remain among the most severely affected segment of the nation's workforce. 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.

### **1. Impact on Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations and their Audiences**

Nationally, financial losses to nonprofit arts and culture organizations are an estimated **\$17.8 billion**, to date. 99% of producing and presenting organizations have cancelled events—a loss of **553 million cancelled ticketed admissions** impacting both arts organizations and audiences. Additionally, local area businesses, such as restaurants, lodging, retail, and parking, have been impacted by cancelled arts and culture events with a loss of **\$17.5 billion in audience ancillary spending**. **Local government revenue losses are \$6.0 billion and 1.03 million jobs have been negatively affected because of cancelled events.** ([Americans for the Arts Survey](#))

- As of July 12, 39% of organizations with in-person programming remain closed to the public. The vast majority, however, expect to return to in-person activities in 2021.
- **BIPOC organizations** are more likely to report that they currently lack the financial resources they need to return to in-person programming than non-BIPOC organizations (55% vs. 38%).
- 77% are 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.
- Audiences are increasingly ready to return. 57% of vaccinated attendees now say they are ready to return to cultural events, up from 25% in February 2021. ([AMS Audience Outlook Monitor](#))

In fact, 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. Impact on Artist & Creative Workers**

Artists/creatives remain among the most severely affected segment of the nation's workforce. 95% lost creative income. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, **63% experienced unemployment.** ([Americans for the Arts Survey](#))

- Alarming, **BIPOC artists had even 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% have been unable to access or afford food at some point during the pandemic and 58% have not visited a medical professional due to an inability to pay.
- **Johns Hopkins University** reports that, as of May 2021, the percentage of [job losses at nonprofit arts organizations](#) is 4 times worse than the average of all nonprofits (-24% vs. -6%).

### **3. 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](#))
- Arts are economic catalysts. The arts industry accelerates economic recovery. A growth in arts employment has a positive and causal effect on overall employment. ([Indiana University](#))
- "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation" jobs dropped from 2.5 million to 1.2 million between February and April 2020 (-53%). **By January 2021, jobs rebounded to 1.7 million and are up to 1.97 million as of May 2021. Positive news, but arts jobs are still down (-21%) since before the pandemic** ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)).