



Research Division  
Note #61  
March 25, 1998

## **Artist Employment in America - 1997**

### **The Artist Labor Force**

Data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicates that employment in artist occupations rose in 1997, and unemployment decreased. Looking at the artist labor force as a whole (i.e., all eleven artist employment categories) there was a decrease of 0.9% in the unemployment rate from 1996-1997. Despite this decrease, the unemployment rate (4.2%) for the eleven artist occupations was still twice the rate for all professional specialty occupations (2.1%). The total number of artists in the labor force for 1997 was 1,962,000 which represents an increase of 51,000 from 1996. The number of employed artist rose from 1,811,000 in 1996 to 1,880,000 in 1997, an increase of 69,000. This surge brought artist employment levels up to a new all time high.

### **Artist Occupations Compared to Professional Specialty Occupations and the Total Labor Force.**

The "All Artists" labor force category as defined in this note includes the eleven occupations listed in Table 1, beginning with Actors and Directors. The "Total Civilian Labor Force" category represents all employed and unemployed persons over the age of 16. The category of "Professional Specialty Occupations" is a broad group of occupations which includes among others the eleven artist occupations listed in Table 1. The category is formed on the basis of the amount of education and training needed for those jobs. The BLS data indicate the following trends:

- The 2.7% rate of growth in the labor force for All Artists in 1997 exceeded that for both Professional Specialty Occupations (2.4%) and the Total Civilian Labor Force (1.3%). The Total Civilian Labor Force grew by 1,785,000 persons in 1997. Approximately one fourth of this growth was within the Professional Specialty Occupation area, which grew by 458,000 persons in 1997.
- The unemployment rates for 1997 show decreases in both Professional Specialty Occupations (-0.2%) and All Artists (-1.0%) from their 1996 levels. The unemployment rate for the Total Civilian Force has dropped each year since 1992, creating a new low of 4.5% in 1997.

Charts 1, 2, and 3 provide graphic representations of trends in employment and unemployment for all workers, professional occupations overall, and artist occupations. The artist occupations, while included among the professional specialty occupations, consistently reported unemployment rates more than twice that for other professionals.

## Trends in the Artist Labor Force Since 1994

The labor force for All Artists has grown significantly since 1994. Table 1 shows a large increase (75,000) from 1994 to 1995, and the following year, 1996, had an even greater increase of 123,000. 1997 showed an increase of 51,000. This trend in growth has brought the size of the labor force to an all time high of 1,962,000. According to these shifts, the unemployment rate for All Artists has decreased by 1.1% since 1994, even though it fluctuated very little between 1994 and 1996.

## The Individual Artist Occupations

Data from 1994 to 1997 concerning employment in the eleven specific artist occupations that comprise the All Artists category are presented in Table 1 of this Research Division Note. Table 1 provides information on the size of each occupation, the number that are either employed or unemployed, and the rate of unemployment.

It should be remembered that:

- The unemployment rates listed in the table are obtained directly from the BLS using unrounded data, and do not precisely reflect the rounded numbers listed for the number of employed and unemployed in each specific category.
- In occupations with labor forces of less than 75,000 there is higher error or variance in estimates due to the small sample size. Year to year changes should be viewed with caution.

The following are trends in individual artist occupations:

- Many artist occupations have shown an increase in employment and a decrease (or no change) in unemployment from 1994 to 1997. These include **announcers; architects; designers, painters, sculptors, craft artists, and artist printmakers; teachers of art/drama/music (post secondary); and other artists.**
- Other occupations have shown an increase in employment, but also in unemployment. These include **actors and directors; and authors;**
- Other occupations have shown a decrease in employment and an increase (or no change) in unemployment from 1994 to 1997. These include **dancers and photographers.** In addition, **musicians/composers** showed a decline in both employment and unemployment over the period.
- The largest growth in jobs was among **designers**, which grew by 105,000 between 1994 and 1997. The largest percentage increase in employment occurred among **actors and directors** -- nearly 52 percent growth from 1994 to 1997.

## About the Data

These national employment statistics are obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistic's Current Population Survey, which reports employment information for over 325 occupations, including eleven arts occupations. A respondent (16 years or older) is considered employed if during the survey week he/she did any paid work in his/her business, profession, or farm. To be considered as working in one of these artist occupations in the BLS' survey, one must be working during the survey week and have described that job/work as one of the eleven artist occupations.

The BLS counts a person as unemployed if they did not have a job during the survey week, were available for work, and had made specific efforts to find a job during the previous four weeks. In order to be counted as unemployed in a particular occupation, an unemployed person's last full-time job must have been in that occupation. Therefore, to be counted as unemployed in one of the artist occupations, one must not have had a job in the survey week, been available for work, have made specific efforts to find work during the four weeks prior to the survey, and last worked in an artist occupation.

It is important to note that those holding more than one job are counted in the job in which they worked the most hours during the survey week. This job is referred to as their primary job, while all other jobs are defined as secondary jobs. According to the article by Thomas Amirault titled *New Data on Multiple Jobholding available from the CPS (Monthly Labor Review, March 1997)*, in 1996 approximately 7.8 million Americans held secondary jobs. Artist occupations ranked among the highest in the percent held as secondary jobs, with musicians and composers having the highest ranking of all of the occupations (art related and non-art related) compared in the Amirault article. The BLS data shown in Table 1 and Chart 1 understates employment in these artist occupations, in particular, as it reflects only primary jobholding. 1995 data on artist occupations for primary and secondary jobholding is cited in the March 1997 issue of *Monthly Labor Review* and is found in the following table.

<b>Secondary Occupation</b> (Numbers in the Thousands)	<b>Primary Job Employment in 1995</b>	<b>Secondary Job Employment in 1995</b>	<b>% in this Occupation as a Secondary Job</b>
Musicians and Composers	162	103	39.0
Announcers	50	25	33.6
Artists, Performers, and Related Workers, n.e.c.	103	30	22.8
Authors	118	29	19.9
Photographers	136	25	15.6
Actors and Directors	115	15	11.3
Painters, Sculptors, Craft-artists, And Artist Printmakers	235	27	10.4

n.e.c.= not elsewhere classified

Source: "Characteristics of Multiple Jobholders, 1995"; Thomas Amirault, *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1997.

It should also be noted that data for the field of Teachers of Art, Drama, and Music (post secondary education) may be misleading. Roughly 40% of post secondary teachers on average do not specify their field, which may mean occupational estimates by specialties are understated.

Please consult the table footnotes for further specific information about the nature of the data being presented in this Research Division Note.

### **Caveats**

This Research Division Note is the sixteenth in an annual series utilizing the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) adapted by the Current Population Survey in 1983. Changes in the occupational classification system improved the consistency in measuring employment in artist occupations. Caution should be used when comparing these data to pre-1983 data.

## Research Division Reports and Notes of Related Interest

### Reports

- #16 Artist Employment and Unemployment: 1971-1980
- #18 Visual Artists in Houston, Minneapolis, Washington, and San Francisco: Earnings and Exhibition opportunities
- #19 Where Artists Live 1980
- #28 Dancemakers
- #29 Trends in Artist Occupations: 1970-1990
- #37 Artists in the Work Force: Employment and Earnings, 1970-1990

Sourcebook of Arts Statistics: 1989, Research Division, April 1990

1992 Addendum to the Sourcebook of Arts Statistics, Research Division, April 1992

### Notes

- #7 Artist Employment in 1983
- #11 Artist Employment in 1984
- #15 Artist Employment in 1985
- #22 Artist Employment in 1986
- #29 Artist Employment in 1987
- #31 Artist Employment in 1988
- #33 Artist Employment in 1989
- #35 Artist Employment in 1990
- #37 Artist Employment in 1991
- #39 Artist Employment in 1992
- #54 Artist Employment in 1993
- #57 Artist Employment in 1994
- #58 Artist Employment in 1995
- #60 Artist Employment in 1996

Further information on these Research Reports and Notes can be found on the National Endowment for the Arts World Wide Web site: [http://arts.endow.gov/Resource/Catalogue/Research\\_Contents.html](http://arts.endow.gov/Resource/Catalogue/Research_Contents.html). An article explaining different ways of "Counting Artists" can also be found on the site: <http://arts.endow.gov/Archive/Features8/Research.html>.

Table 1. The Artist Labor Force: Trends in Employment & Unemployment, 1994-1997  
(all numbers in thousand)

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>Change From '96-'97</b>	<b>Change From '94-'97</b>
<b>Total All Civilian Workers</b>	<b>136,297</b>	<b>133,943</b>	<b>132,304</b>	<b>131,056</b>	<b>+2,354</b>	<b>+5,241</b>
Employed	129,558	126,708	124,900	123,060	+2,850	+6,498
Unemployed	6,739	7,236	7,404	7,996	-497	-1,257
Unemployment Rate	4.9%	5.4%	5.6%	6.1%	-0.5%	-1.2%
<b>Professional Specialty Occupations</b>	<b>19,648</b>	<b>19,190</b>	<b>18,592</b>	<b>17,989</b>	<b>+458</b>	<b>+1,659</b>
Employed	19,245	18,752	18,132	17,536	+493	+1,709
Unemployed	403	438	460	453	-35	-50
Unemployment Rate	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.5%	-0.2%	-0.4%
<b>All Artists</b>	<b>1,962</b>	<b>1,911</b>	<b>1,788</b>	<b>1,713</b>	<b>+51</b>	<b>+249</b>
Employed	1,880	1,811	1,693	1,622	+69	+258
Unemployed	82	100	95	91	-18	-9
Unemployment Rate	4.2%	5.2%	5.3%	5.3%	-1.0%	-1.1%
<b>Actors and Directors</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>+51</b>
Employed	136	136	114	86	0	+50
Unemployed	14	15	16	13	-1	+1
Unemployment Rate	9.2%	9.8%	12.1%	13.0%	-0.6%	-3.8%
<b>Announcers</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>+15</b>
Employed	61	62	50	46	-1	+15
Unemployed	3	4	3	3	-1	0
Unemployment Rate	4.3%	5.9%	5.7%	5.3%	-1.6%	-1.0%
<b>Architects</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>+24</b>
Employed	169	160	163	141	+9	+28
Unemployed	2	4	3	6	-2	-4
Unemployment Rate	1.4%	2.6%	2.1%	4.4%	-1.2%	-3.0%
<b>Authors</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>+24</b>	<b>+26</b>
Employed	137	114	118	112	+23	+25
Unemployed	4	3	5	3	+1	+1
Unemployment Rate	3.1%	2.8%	3.9%	3.0%	+0.3%	+0.1%
<b>Dancers</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>+1</b>
Employed	27	30	30	28	-3	-1
Unemployed	4	2	3	2	+2	+2
Unemployment Rate	13.6%	6.4%	7.9%	5.9%	+7.2%	+7.7%
<b>Designers</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>+47</b>	<b>+105</b>
Employed	658	603	556	548	+55	+110
Unemployed	23	31	30	28	-8	-5
Unemployment Rate	3.4%	4.9%	5.2%	4.8%	-1.5%	-1.4%

Table 1. continued

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>Change From</u> <u>'96-'97</u>	<u>Change From</u> <u>'94-'97</u>
<b>Musicians/Composers</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>-22</b>	<b>-11</b>
Employed	155	175	161	164	-20	-9
Unemployed	12	14	11	14	-2	-2
Unemployment Rate	7.1%	7.4%	6.3%	8.0%	-0.3%	-0.9%
<b>Painters, Sculptors, Craft Artists &amp; Artist Printmakers</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>+14</b>	<b>+25</b>
Employed	251	235	233	225	+16	+26
Unemployed	8	10	8	9	-2	-1
Unemployment Rate	3.0%	3.9%	3.2%	3.9%	-0.9%	-0.9%
<b>Photographers</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>-16</b>
Employed	132	141	136	148	-9	-16
Unemployed	5	6	8	5	-1	0
Unemployment Rate	3.9%	4.2%	5.5%	3.3%	-0.3%	+0.6%
<b>Teachers of Art/Drama/Music (post secondary education)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>+3</b>
Employed	36	40	30	33	-4	+3
Unemployed	0	1	1	*	-1	*
Unemployment Rate	0.5%	2.3%	1.7%	0.7%	-1.8%	-0.2%
<b>Other Artists, N.E.C.**</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+26</b>
Employed	118	115	102	91	+3	+27
Unemployed	7	10	7	8	-3	-1
Unemployment Rate	5.6%	7.7%	6.8%	7.9%	-2.1%	-2.3%

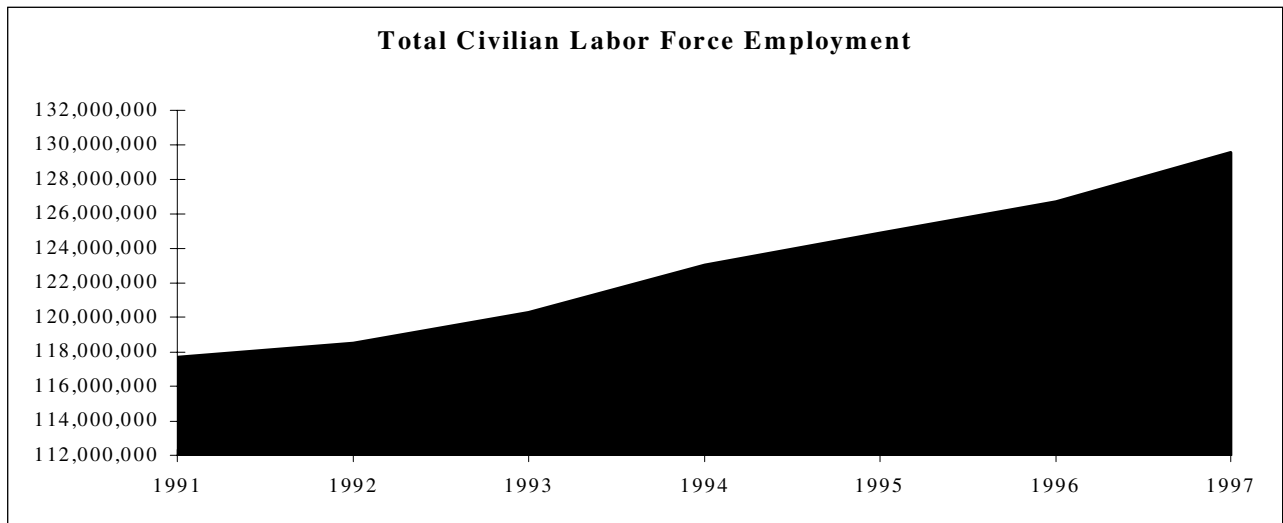
\*Less than 1,000

\*\*Not Elsewhere Classified

Note: These labor force statistics are based on a sample survey and, consequently, are subject to sampling errors. Relatively small changes in employment in the smaller artist occupations are often not statistically significant. For a more detailed discussion, see Research Division Report #16, Artists Employment and Unemployment: 1971-1980, Appendix B, "Reliability of Current Population Survey (CPS) Statistics." All unemployment rates shown in the Table, except 'All Artists,' were calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics using unrounded data.

Source: Current Population Survey 1994-1997  
U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Chart 1. Total Civilian Labor Employment, Professional Specialty Occupations Employment, and All Artist Occupations Employment: 1991 -1997



Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts, 1998

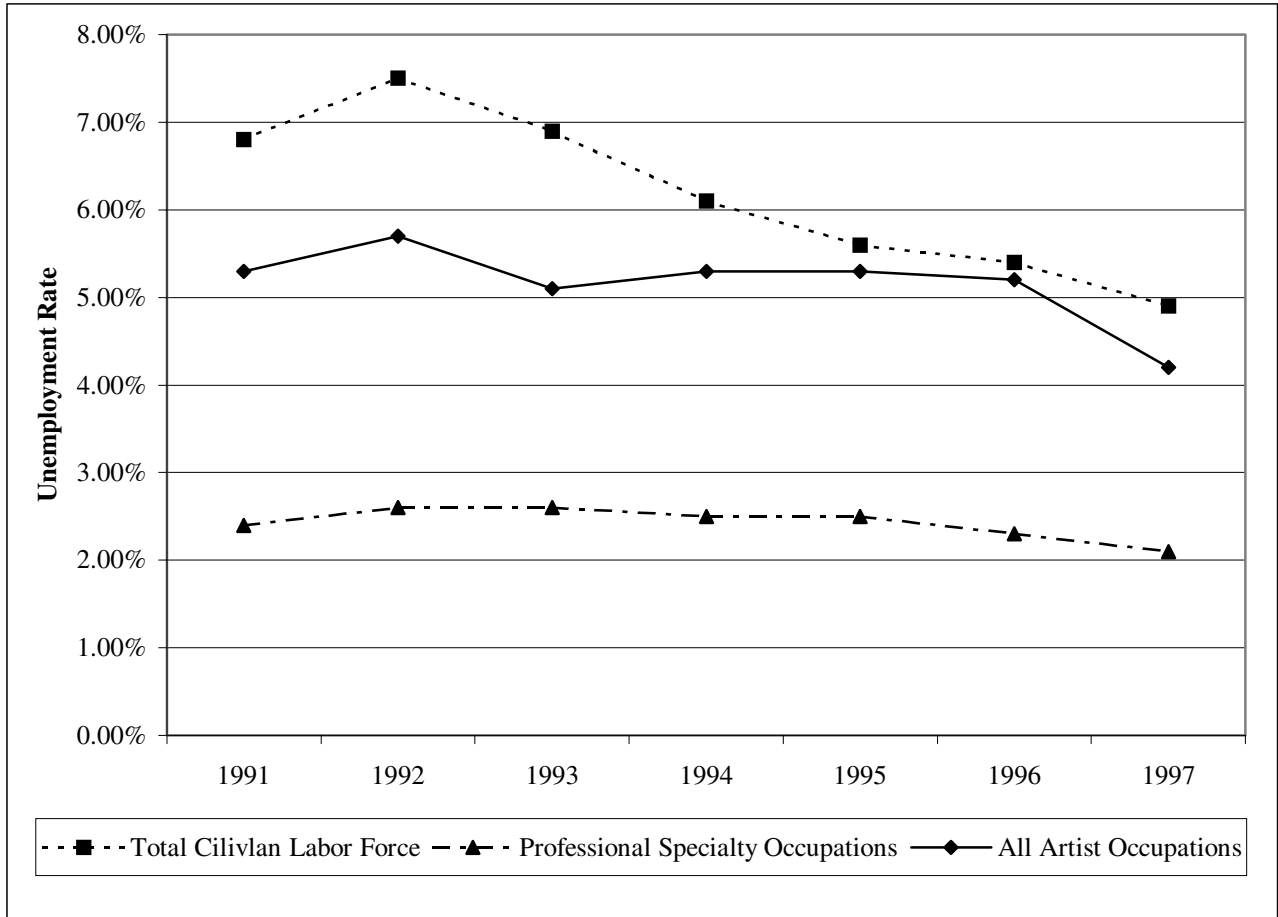
Chart 2. Total Civilian Labor Unemployment, Professional Specialty Occupations Unemployment, and All Artist Occupations Unemployment: 1991 -1997



Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts, 1998



Chart 3. Rates of Unemployment for Total Civilian Labor Force, Professional Specialty Occupations and All Artist Occupations from 1991 -1997



Research Division, National Endowment for the Arts, 1998