



2024 ARTIST COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT



GREATER PITTSBURGH ARTS COUNCIL
Arts loud and clear



FOREWARD

The 2024 Artist Community Survey Report is an illuminating document that highlights the state of our artistic community in the Greater Pittsburgh area. This report captures the voices of hundreds of local artists, revealing persistent barriers — from affordable housing and income stability to equitable access to professional development — that challenge our artists' ability to thrive.

This report is more than data; it's a rallying cry. As we seek to make our region a place where artists choose to live, work, and flourish, we must recognize that artists are central to a thriving arts community, and a thriving arts community is integral to our region's identity and vibrancy. True progress can only be achieved if artists are active voices in broader conversations around labor, equity, and economic justice. Aligning with larger labor movements and advocating for policies that recognize creative work as essential work will lead to a future where artists are fully supported as they contribute to our shared culture.

Now is the time for us all — community members, leaders, and allies — to invest in sustainable solutions that place artists at the heart of discussions on equity. Together, let's make Pittsburgh a model for how artists can build lives, careers, and futures that are as captivating as the art they create.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Patrick Fisher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patrick" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Fisher".

Patrick Fisher,
CEO, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council

HOW THE ARTS COUNCIL USES THIS RESEARCH

The Arts Council commits to ensuring that the data we collect is catalyzed to create a more resourced, connected, and informed arts sector. Findings from this survey directly influence internal annual reviews and renewals of our advocacy priorities, which includes ensuring that the information within is shared with those with the authority to enact change when needed.

A full-length technical version of this report, which includes detailed breakdowns for every question in this survey, can be found at pittsburghartscouncil.org/research. Requests for additional printed copies of this summary report can be directed to info@pittsburghartscouncil.org.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About This Report	4
Who Responded	6
State of Artist Quality of Life	10
Barriers to Career Advancement	14
Focus on Funding	16
Artist Outlook: Living and Working in Pittsburgh	17
In Closing	18
Works Cited	18
Acknowledgements	19

On the Cover: Artist Annesley Bug greets visitors to their solo exhibition, "Snug as a Bug," at Assemble during Unblurred First Fridays Art Crawl. Photo by Maranie Rae. Pictured at Left: Participants work on an art project inside Assemble. Photo by Maranie Rae.



ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council regularly measures the health of Greater Pittsburgh's arts and culture sector. Our Arts Community Survey is conducted every two years and tracks the challenges, accomplishments, and aspirations of artists and arts and culture organization personnel living and working in the region.

In 2024, the organization community survey was combined with PA CultureCheck, a joint project between PA Humanities, The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council. For that reason, this report focuses specifically on the 2024 survey of artists.

SCOPE AND METHODS

The Artist Community Survey was a 39-question digitally distributed survey administered over five weeks. Survey questions were guided by connection to the following research questions:

1. How does artist quality of life continue to evolve based on ability to access basic needs (i.e., housing, health insurance, living wage, etc.)?
2. What are the biggest barriers to artists' career advancement and success?
3. How do artists perceive access to opportunities, funding, or exposure? How do perceptions vary across lines of difference in identity or experience?
4. How do artists feel about their future in the Greater Pittsburgh area?

RESPONSES, COMPENSATION, AND DATA VALIDATION

The Arts Council believes in compensating artists for their labor. Artist respondents received \$15 in exchange for their time to complete our survey. This equates to an approximate rate of \$30-45/hour based on survey length.

This year's artist survey had record participation, receiving 340 (295 complete and 46 partial) individual responses. Three responses were removed due to being out of geographic range, leaving 337 responses to be analyzed.

LIMITATIONS

The primary limitation of this survey is its overrepresentation of Allegheny County artists (90%). When generalizing about artists in the Pittsburgh area, this geographic representation should be noted.

Detail from "Technicolor Dream Quilt" by Annesley Bug.



DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used throughout this report:

Weighted Average

Weighted averages are determined by assigning a numeric score to each answer on a scale (i.e., “not at all important” = 1; “very important” = 5) and calculating the average score based on the number of respondents who selected each answer choice. Answers with the highest weighted averages were most frequently rated as having high significance or importance to respondents. In these surveys, both scales of 1-4 and 1-5 were used. Maximum values are noted where applicable.

Global Majority Artists

When speaking about racialized people and or organizations as a collective, this report uses the term “Global Majority.” The following definition is attributed to Rosemary Campbell-Stephens MBE from the essay “Global Majority; Decolonising the language and Reframing the Conversation about Race.”

“Global Majority is a collective term that first and foremost speaks to and encourages those so-called, to think of themselves as belonging to the majority on planet earth. It refers to people who are Black, African, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or, have been racialised as ‘ethnic minorities’. Globally these groups currently represent approximately eighty per cent (80%) of the world’s population, making them the global majority now, and with current growth rates, notwithstanding the Covid-19 pandemic, they are set to remain so for the foreseeable future.”¹

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council updated its style guide in 2024 to replace the term BIPOC with Global Majority at the recommendation of its Learning and Leadership Committee, an advisory committee of Global Majority arts leaders, artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs. Where there were differences for Black respondents specifically, those differences are also noted in this report.

1. Rosemary Campbell-Stephens MBE, “Global Majority; Decolonising the language and Reframing the Conversation about Race,” 2020, www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/-/media/files/schools/school-of-education/final-leeds-beckett-1102-global-majority.pdf. We encourage readers to read the whole essay to better understand the rationale for the creation and use of this term.



Participants at Assemble's First Friday reception make art. Photo by Maranie Rae.

WHO RESPONDED

ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Note: percentages add to over 100% because respondents could select more than one discipline.

Performing Arts

Dance	6.5%
Music	14.5%
Musical Theatre	5.0%
Opera	2.0%
Storytelling	18.1%
Theatre (dramatic, comedy, mime, puppet, etc.)	10.4%

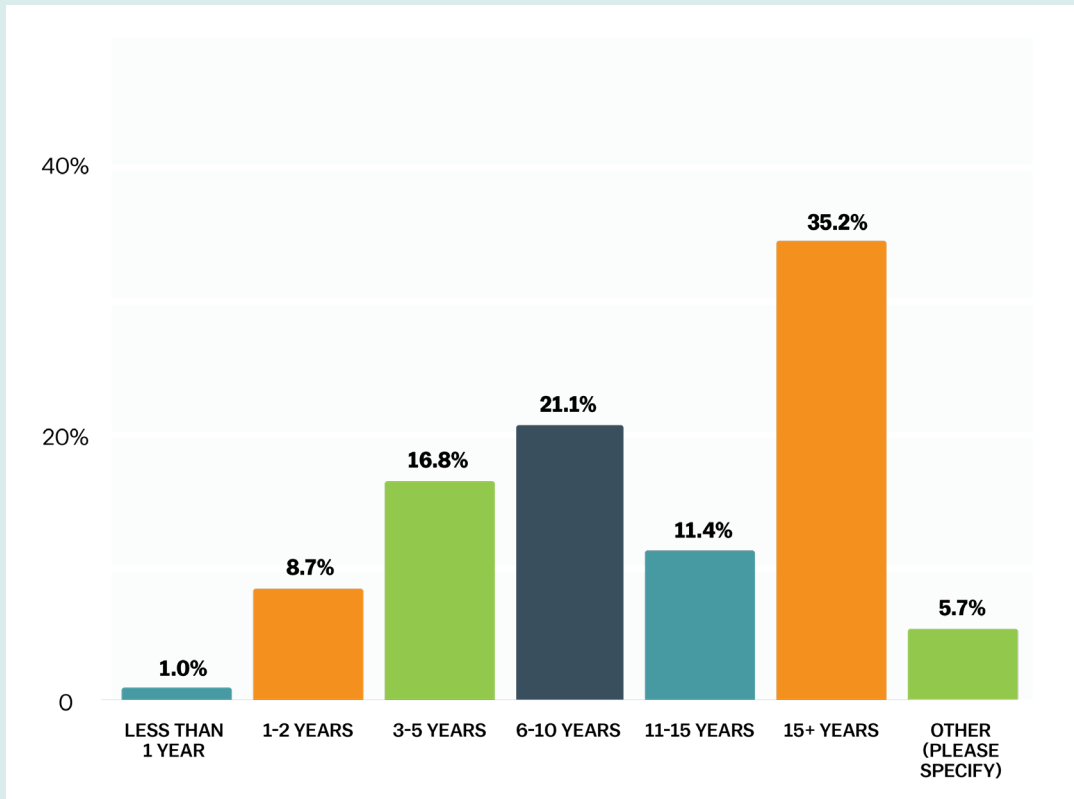
Visual Arts

2-dimensional (graphics, painting, etc.)	56.7%
3-dimensional (sculpture, installation, etc.)	29.4%
Crafts (clay, fiber, metal, wood, etc.)	22.3%
Design Arts (architecture, graphic, fashion, etc.)	22.0%
Media Arts (film, audio, video, etc.)	21.1%
Photography	20.8%

Other Disciplines

Literature (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, etc.)	17.2%
Interdisciplinary	13.6%
Folks/Traditional Arts	5.9%
Humanities	4.4%

LENGTH OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE



GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

90% of responses came from Allegheny County. The most represented zip codes include 15212 (Northside of Pittsburgh), 15217 (Squirrel Hill and Greenfield neighborhoods of Pittsburgh), and 15221 (including the Homewood neighborhood of Pittsburgh as well as Wilkinsburg, Forest Hills, and Braddock Hills boroughs). Ten percent of responses came from surrounding counties including Beaver (3%), Butler, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland (1-2% each).

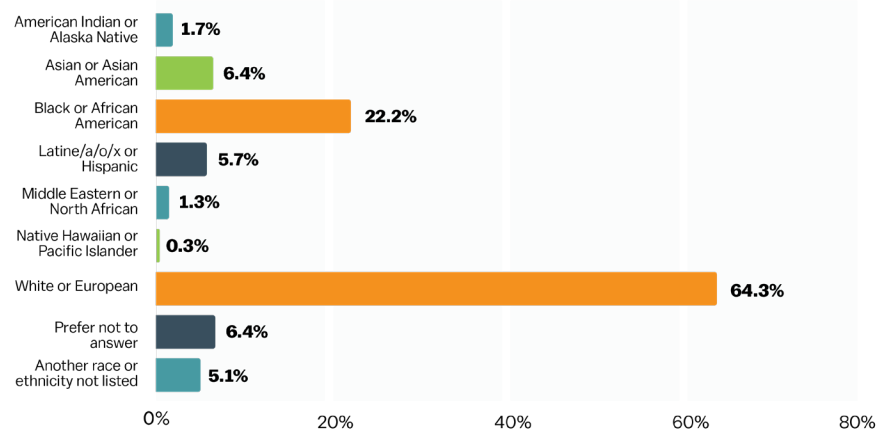




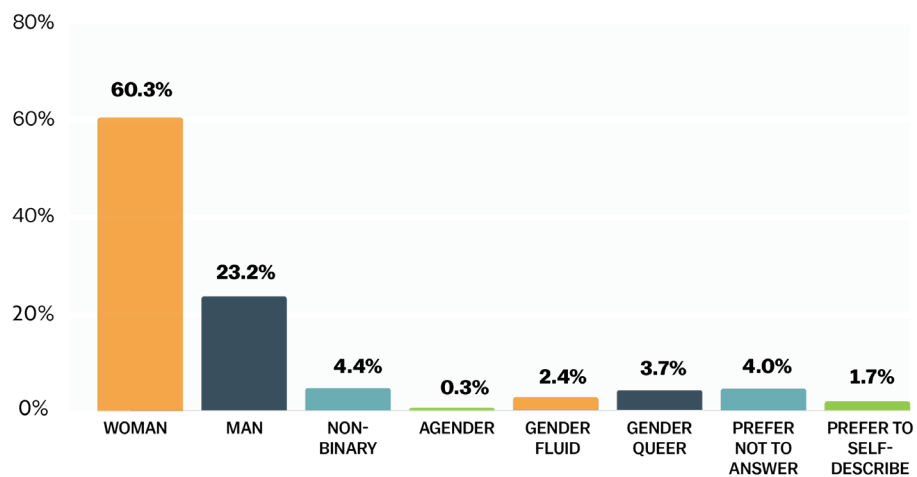
WHO RESPONDED

ARTIST RACE AND ETHNICITY

Note: percentages add to over 100% because respondents could select more than one race or ethnicity.

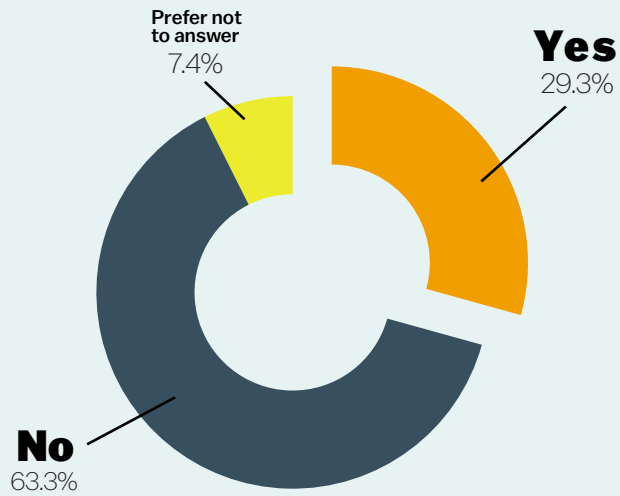


ARTIST GENDER



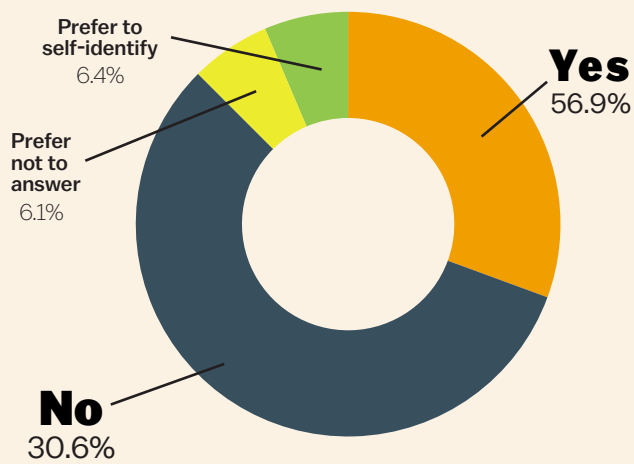
Pictured at Left: Performers from OCA Pittsburgh perform at Moon Fest. Photo by Patrick Fisher.

ARTISTS WHO IDENTIFY AS PART OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

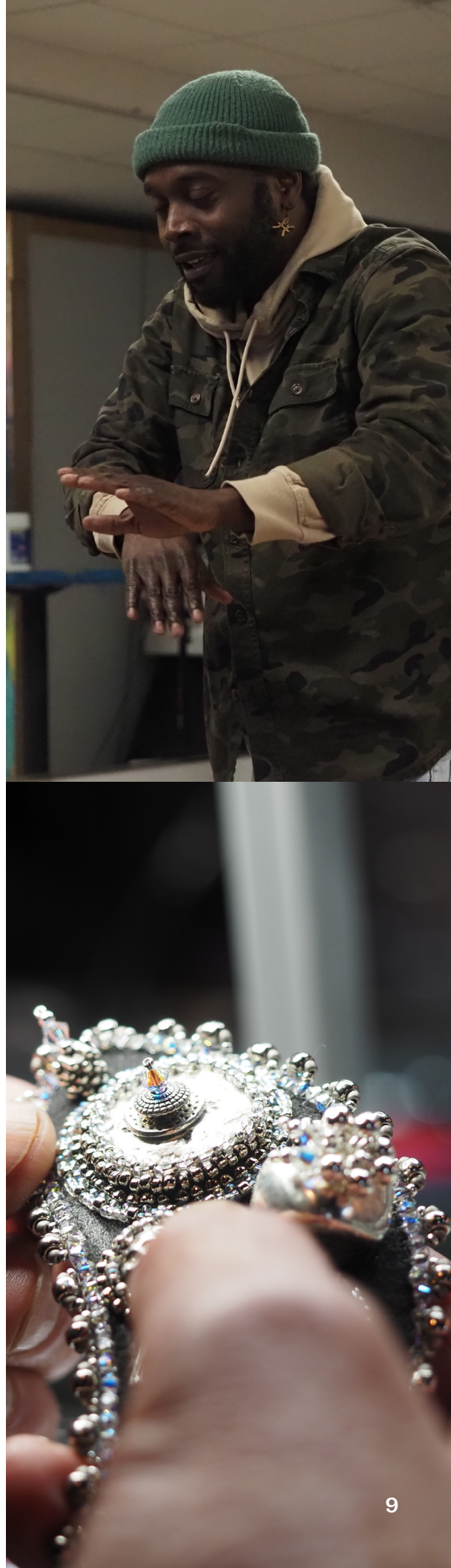


Note: 3% of respondents identified as transgender.

ARTISTS WHO IDENTIFY AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY



Top: Mario Quinn Lyles of Level Up Studios demonstrates a dance move. Bottom: Artist Jeffrey Smith shows a detail of his jewelry work. Photos by Patrick Fisher.





STATE OF ARTIST QUALITY OF LIFE

The following data paints a picture of how artists are meeting their basic needs, earning income, and balancing artistic practices with non-artistic work. Where possible, artist quality of life measures were compared to Allegheny County averages and previous artist surveys.

INCOME

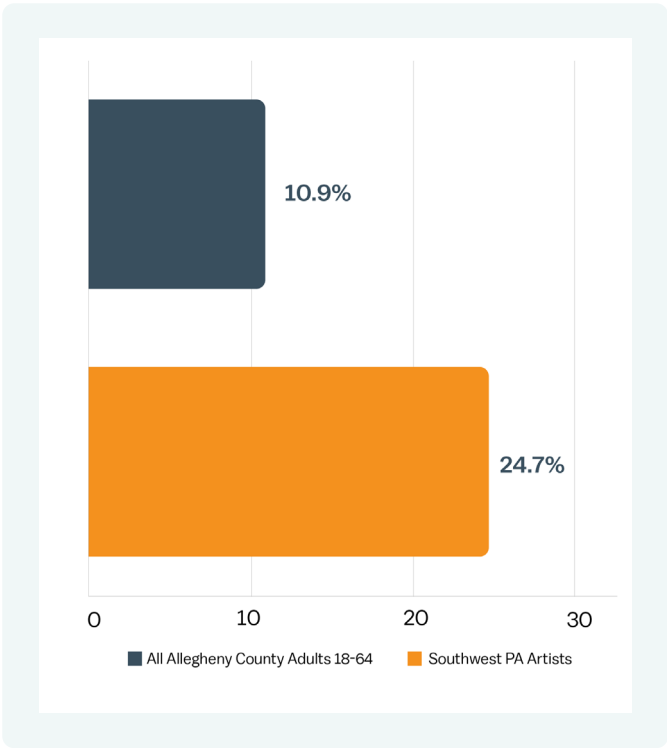
For local artists, artistic independent contract work, selling artwork, and arts-related teaching work were the most common sources of income, followed closely by artistic commissions. About a quarter of artists (22.5%) work full time in a non-arts-related job, and about the same percentage (24.8%) work at least one non-arts part-time job.

This year’s survey found that artists continue to have an overall higher poverty rate when compared to the Allegheny County adult poverty rate. The 2024 federal poverty line for individuals is \$15,060.² In 2023, an estimated 10.9% of Allegheny County adults were living in poverty.³

Almost 1/4 of artists reported making less than \$15,000 a year from all sources, meaning the poverty rate of local artists is more than double that of the average population.

We changed the individual and household income brackets this year to better match federal statistics, so we can’t directly compare these income responses to previous surveys. That said, there weren’t any notable shifts in income distribution that couldn’t be explained by changes to the income brackets.

POVERTY RATE COMPARISON BASED ON 2024 FEDERAL STANDARDS



2. "Poverty Guidelines," Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, accessed October 10, 2024, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>.
3. United States Census Bureau, "Allegheny County, Pennsylvania," Accessed October 10, 2024, https://data.census.gov/profile/Allegheny_County_Pennsylvania?g=050XX00US42003.



Pictured at Left: Dancer María Núñez performs with Alba Flamenco. Photo by Patrick Fisher.

2024 ARTIST INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

	Artist Household Incomes	Artist Individual Incomes
less than \$15,000 per year	8.7%	24.7%
\$15,000 - \$29,999 per year	11.8%	24.7%
\$30,000 - \$49,999 per year	24.6%	21.6%
\$50,000 - \$74,999 per year	20.8%	16.4%
\$75,000 - \$119,999 per year	18.3%	8.9%
\$120,000 - \$200,000 per year	14.9%	3.8%
more than \$200,000 per year	1.0%	0.0%

Other notes on income include the fact that more than half of respondents (57%) reported making less than 25% of their income from their artistic practice, while 28.5% reported making 75-100% of their income from artistic work. Those making 75-100% of their income from artistic sources were more likely to report individual incomes of \$15,000 or less (30.2%). They were also slightly more likely to report household incomes over \$120,000 (20.9% vs. 15.9%).



When asked whether their individual incomes had increased, decreased, or stayed the same, artists' answers fell nearly equally in every category. Within the 85 comments received on this question, **many shared about how much their income varies from year to year:**

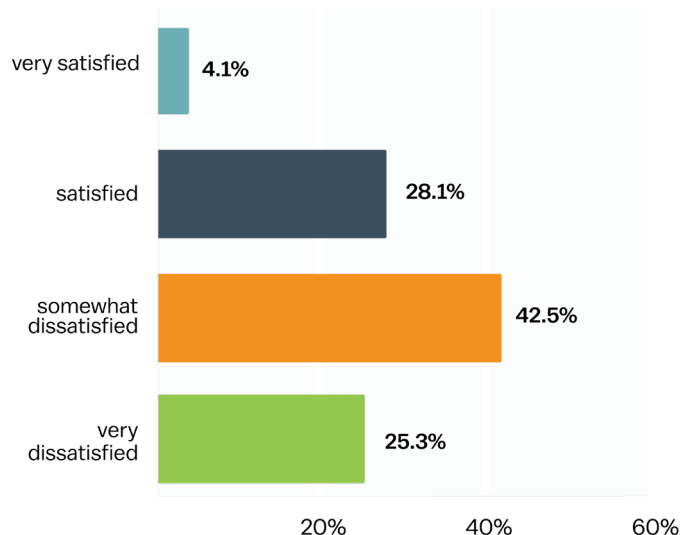
"I'm a sole proprietor artist. Some years I get large commissions, and/or well-paying gigs doing my interactive sculpture work. Other years are lean. It varies a good bit."
- Sculpture artist

"Most of my part-time jobs are short-term contracts, and my income fluctuates a lot. I am currently unemployed."
- Interdisciplinary, community-engaged art, and social practice artist

FINANCIAL SATISFACTION

Most artists said they are “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their current financial situation. Debt, inflation, and concerns about lack of access to contract work and/or equitable wages were common concerns.

OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR CURRENT FINANCIAL SITUATION?



“Relying on ephemeral teaching gigs always feels like it comes with a risk and a feast or famine mentality. [I] would like to approach life with more balance but I feel concerned about having enough income each month. I may consider other part time employment this year.”

- Visual and craft artist

“Pittsburgh strongly needs to increase minimum wage, and more arts organizations need to move toward livable wages for freelancers over token stipends.”

- Theater and media artist



Visitors at an Unblurred First Fridays art sale. Photo by Maranie Rae.

ADDITIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE MEASURES

HOUSING

As in previous surveys, more than half of artists report owning their own home, though that percentage has been declining slowly since 2016. Renting an apartment is the second most common (and growing) form of housing for artists. The percentage of artists living with friends and/or family has decreased since 2022 but remains over 200% higher than it was in 2016.

ARTIST FORMS OF HOUSING



FUN FACT:



Artists are twice as likely to use public transit.⁴

According to a 2023 study, about 15% of Pittsburghers use public transit. Over a third of artists (36.6%) reported using the public bus system alone!

PUBLIC PROGRAM UTILIZATION

After our 2022 community survey, we reported that artists were surprisingly less likely than expected to utilize public programs such as Medicaid or SNAP/EBT based on income and general population statistics.⁵ This year, we saw a slight increase in utilization of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), rising from 12.8% to 16.7%. Medicaid utilization remained about the same (22.2%).

TAKING CARE OF BASIC NEEDS

Taking care of basic needs (e.g., health care, housing, etc.) remains on the top five challenges of all artists, with artists of the Global Majority rating this challenge slightly higher (weighted score of 2.7 out of 4) than the average of all artists (2.5).

"SNAP benefits are very hard to get when you are self-employed. They do not understand that some months you make some money and some you don't. They also do not understand that a large portion of your 'income' must go back into the business to keep it running. They want to monitor your checking account to see how much you have. It's just so horrible."

- Visual and craft artist

4. Laura Pop-Badiu, "No Car, No Problem in These Top U.S. Cities — Boston Takes the Lead as the Best Place to Live Without a Car," *Coworking Cafe*, June 13, 2023, <https://www.coworkingcafe.com/blog/boston-leads-as-the-best-us-city-to-live-without-a-car/>.

5. Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, "Impact to Insight: Findings from the 2022 Community Survey," 2022, 14, www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/sites/default/files/documents/impact-to-insight-2022.pdf.

BARRIERS TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT

As in previous years, we asked artists to rank the significance of certain challenges and barriers in their professional lives. This information helps the Arts Council and others to support the development of services, initiatives, and programs to address these barriers and help artists thrive.

This year, the average of all artists and artists of the Global Majority had the same top five concerns (though barriers four and five were flipped). In general, artists of the Global Majority were more likely to rate these barriers as “very” or “extremely” significant, which is why the weighted average scores are higher for this group. These top four barriers for all artists are the same as they were in 2022, but this year, “taking care of basic needs” returned to the list at the 5th most significant barrier for all artists.

BARRIERS TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT (SCORES OUT OF 4)

All Artists			Artists of the Global Majority	
1	Securing grants, fellowships, donations	2.97	Securing grants, fellowships, donations	3.11
2	Marketing, promoting your art	2.91	Marketing, promoting your art	3.05
3	Managing personal and artistic finances	2.71	Managing personal and artistic finances	2.94
4	Finding affordable studio/ work/rehearsal space	2.49	Finding affordable studio/ work/rehearsal space	2.76
5	Taking care of basic needs (e.g., health care, housing, etc.)	2.54	Taking care of basic needs (e.g., health care, housing, etc.)	2.68

In addition, seven out of the 79 comments on this question named the additional barrier of ageism.

“If this is helpful, I find that personally each of these things interact so closely with each other. Due to lack of employment, I find the small amount of funding that I would use to grow my artistic practice is used on my basic needs instead. Which leaves little to know room to allow for creativity to flourish!”

- Multidisciplinary artist

"One major thing I noticed is the difficulty for local artists to receive gallery representation from some of the larger Pittsburgh names, a lot of those places tend to source out of the city, and thus many Pittsburgh artists feel they have to leave and show elsewhere in order to gain access to the larger name galleries in their own hometown."

- Visual and interdisciplinary artist

"Getting grants are one thing, keeping relationships with donors and funders is another, and transitioning out of grant dependency is a whole entire other thing. I would like to see more resources and information on diversifying income streams to support artistic practices and livelihoods."

- Music, storytelling, and interdisciplinary artist

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

When asked to identify issues that the arts community must address for a healthy future, artists named the below as their top concerns:

1 FUNDING

2 DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

3 VISIBILITY AND EXPOSURE

4 AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

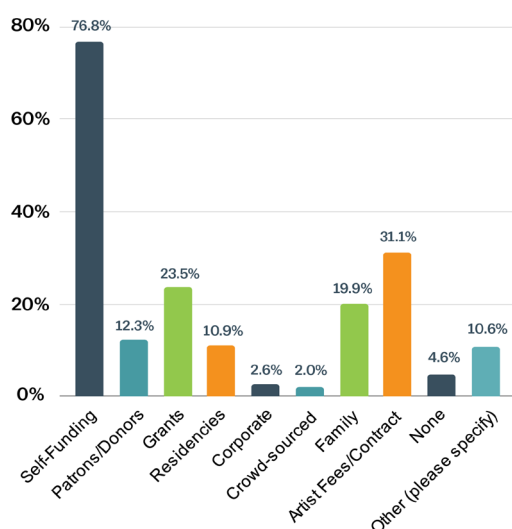
5 ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND/OR MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Although it didn't reach the top five, the need for more low-barrier performance and/or exhibition opportunities is an emerging issue to watch for future years.

FOCUS ON FUNDING

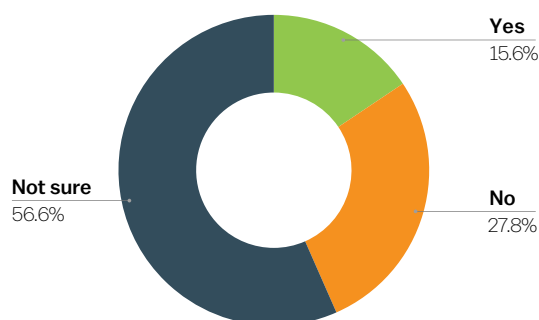
As in previous surveys, most artists reported self-funding their creative work. Fees and contracts, grants, and family were the other most common sources of funding. Few artists fund their work through patrons, donors, or residencies.

HOW ARTISTS FUND THEIR WORK



Since 2016, we have asked artists whether they find grant funding in the region to be fair and equitable. Most artists remain “unsure” about this question, but in 2024, artists were more likely to answer “no” than “yes.”

DO YOU FIND GRANT FUNDING FOR ARTISTS IN THE GREATER PITTSBURGH REGION TO BE FAIR AND EQUITABLE?



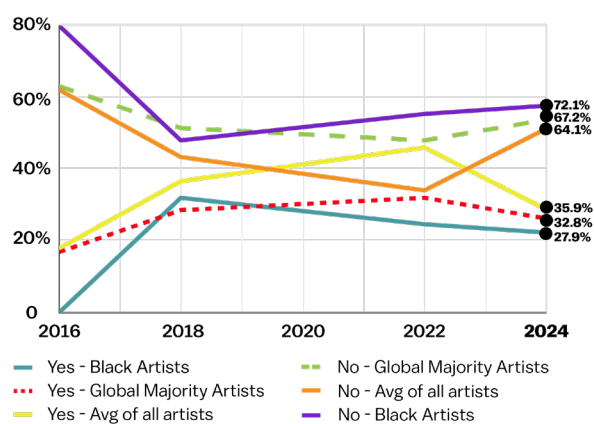
When we remove the “unsure” answers, just 35% of artists said “yes,” which dropped significantly from 57.5% in 2022. Artists of the Global Majority remain less likely than the average of all artists to answer “yes” to this question, and just about a quarter of Black artists who were not “unsure” said “yes.”

Artists report applying for an average of 2.5 grants annually, with an average of 69% of those grants being funded. Black artists reported applying for more grants, on average (4.2) but reported a lower percent of grants funded (30%).

“The hourly rate is quite low for the work demanded, though the fees for materials seem fair. I wish funding time was as good as funding material.”

- Multidisciplinary artist

DO YOU FIND GRANT FUNDING FOR ARTISTS IN THE GREATER PITTSBURGH REGION TO BE FAIR AND EQUITABLE?



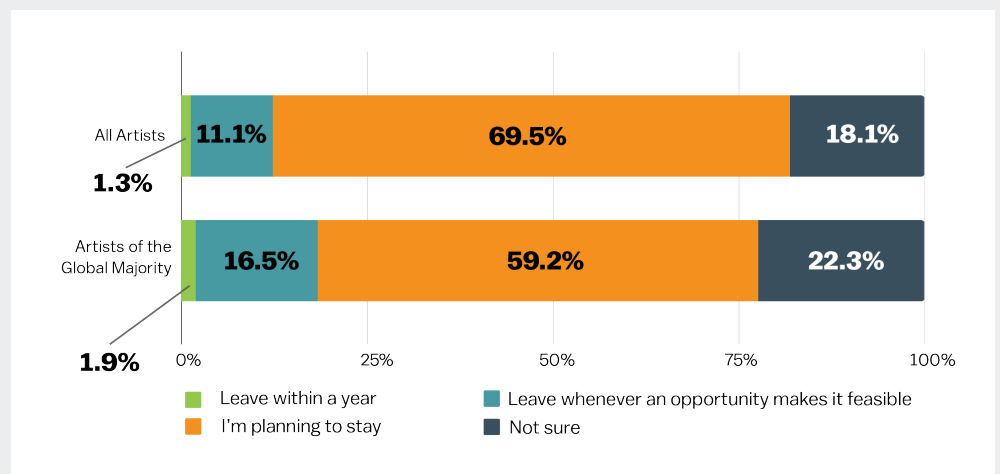
ARTIST OUTLOOK: LIVING AND WORKING IN PITTSBURGH

Over half of the artists that responded to the survey (54%) have lived in the Pittsburgh region for 15 years or more. Jobs and partners were the most common reasons for artists to choose to move to Pittsburgh. Artistic opportunities were the reason for 15.6% of artists choosing to move to the region.

STAYING VS. LEAVING THE REGION

When asked about whether they plan to stay in the region or to leave, most artists indicate they plan to stay. This is true across all groups, though artists of the Global Majority were more likely to say that they are planning to leave compared to the average (18.4% vs. 12.4%)

DO YOU PLAN ON STAYING IN THE PITTSBURGH AREA?



A LOOK INTO ARTISTS OF THE GLOBAL MAJORITY PLANNING TO LEAVE

Artists of the Global Majority who are planning to leave the Pittsburgh area are more likely to report significant challenges to funding their work and meeting their basic needs. About 60% of these artists rated “securing grants, fellowships, or donations” as extremely significant compared to around 35% of all artists. Half of these artists also identified taking care of basic needs (health care, housing, etc.) as an extremely significant barrier to artistic career advancement.

Artists of the Global Majority who are planning to leave are also more likely to earn a small percentage of their income from their art. Forty percent of these artists make 10% or less of their income from artistic work. Just 10% of these artists make 76% to 100% of their income from their art. This might suggest that Global Majority artists who are planning to leave are seeking locations where they are able to make a greater proportion of their living from art alone.

“I would love to stay but there aren’t enough opportunities. I need something that makes life affordable.”

- Multidisciplinary artist of the Global Majority planning to leave

“I still have a lot of growing to do as an artist, business owner, and right now I have an opportunity to do that in Pittsburgh. I love what I get to do, and I want to get better at it. I see myself living here for at least the next 5 years.”

- Multidisciplinary artist of the Global Majority planning to stay



IN CLOSING

After hours at Unblurred Gallery
Crawl. Photo by Maranie Rae

A RALLYING CRY: END WORDS FROM OUR CEO

Our journey from research to action begins now. This report's findings reveal the deep impact of systemic issues — affordable housing, living wages, and accessible public services — on the lives of artists, limiting both their creative growth and quality of life. Yet, we now hold the knowledge and power to pursue transformative change with collective and urgent resolve.

Artists must be integral to the broader social conversations shaping our region's future. Advocacy for policies that include affordable housing and guarantee household-sustaining wages must include the creative sector, where too many struggle with inconsistent incomes. Equally essential is strengthening and expanding access to public services, ensuring that these economic and social supports fully meet the needs of artists as community members.

This is our call to action: a challenge to all in Southwestern Pennsylvania to recognize and uplift artists as essential contributors to our region's vibrancy, cultural identity, and as voices crucial to meaningful societal reform. Let's use this report as a rallying point to drive overdue change, embedding the arts — and the artists who sustain them — into the foundation of a just, inclusive, and thriving community. Together, we can build momentum toward a future where artists, regardless of background or circumstance, can sustain lives of creativity, impact, and fulfillment in the Greater Pittsburgh region.

- Patrick Fisher

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ABOUT GREATER PITTSBURGH ARTS COUNCIL

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council builds a more resourced, connected, and informed arts sector, empowering artists and arts organizations throughout Southwestern PA. By sharing resources, fostering significant relationships, leading advocacy initiatives, and increasing public awareness of arts and culture, the Arts Council cultivates a thriving, vibrant arts community for the Greater Pittsburgh region.



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