



COVID-19's Impact on The Arts

Research & Tracking Update: August 24, 2020

The coronavirus is having a devastating impact on America's arts sector. Since the first U.S. case was reported in January 2020, cancellations have taken place at virtually every arts organization in the country and artists/creative workers are among the most severely affected segment of the nation's workforce. Americans for the Arts leads four national studies tracking the human and financial impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the arts.

1. Impact on Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Sector

Nationally, financial losses to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations are an estimated \$12.5 billion as of August 24, 2020. 96% of organizations have cancelled events since the onset of the pandemic—some as far out as summer 2021—resulting in a loss of 354 million admissions and \$11.2 billion in audience spending at local businesses (restaurants, lodging, retail, parking). The total economic impact of organizational and audience-spending losses is \$4.0 billion in lost government revenue and 701,000 jobs no longer being supported. Findings are based on 17,900 survey responses. ([Survey](#). [Dashboard](#).)

- 10% are “not confident” that they will survive the pandemic (a potential loss of 12,000 organizations).
- 29% laid off or furloughed staff (38% expect to make permanent staff reductions).
- 10% of organizations never closed. 14% have already re-opened. 22% plan to open in 2020. 6% plan to open in 2021. 48% have no target date for re-opening.
- 62% make their cultural product available online or through social media.

2. Impact on Artist/Creative Workers

Artists/creatives are among the most severely affected workers by the pandemic. 63% have become fully unemployed. They expect to lose an average of \$22,200 each in creativity-based income in 2020 (\$50.6 billion, nationally). Findings are based on 24,200 survey responses. ([Survey](#). [Dashboard](#).)

- 94% report loss of income.
- 79% experienced a decrease in creative work that generated income (62% “drastic decrease”).
- 66% are unable to access the supplies, resources, spaces, or people necessary for their work.
- 78% have no post-pandemic financial recovery plan.
- Black, Indigenous, and artists of color have higher rates of unemployment than white artists due to the pandemic (69% vs. 60%). They also expect to lose a larger percentage of their income (61% vs. 56%).
- Top Needs for Artists: (1) unemployment insurance, (2) food/housing assistance, (3) forgivable business loans.

3. COVID-19 and Social Distancing: Impact of Arts and Other Activities on Mental Health

This ongoing study demonstrates that the arts provide mental health benefits to the public—even during the pandemic—combating the ill effects of isolation and loneliness associated with COVID-19. Preliminary findings show that just 30 minutes of active arts activities daily lowers anxiety and depression and increases life satisfaction. Initially begun by University College London in the UK, the study has been extended to the U.S. in partnership with the University of Florida and Americans for the Arts. All are welcome to participate. ([Survey](#))

4. CARES Act Arts Funding Tracker

On March 27, 2020, Congress passed the \$2.3 trillion CARES Act to financially support small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and gig workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This Tracker measures the success of the arts sector in securing eight federal CARES Act relief funding programs. Results to date are based on 3,600 respondents. ([Share your results](#))

- Payroll Protection Program (PPP): 82% success rate
- Emergency Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL): 45% success rate
- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA): 49% success rate

The most current version of this update is maintained at www.AmericansForTheArts.org/node/103614.