

INFORMATION ON ARTISTS III: Bay Area

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By surveying artists in the San Francisco Bay Area over a fifteen-year period, we have been able to understand both their progress and their challenges in areas of work-related human and social services. These artists are a more stable population than we might have supposed—69% have resided and 59% have worked in the same county for more than ten years, 65% received training in the Bay Area, close to half volunteer their services to the community, and 70% feel valued by their community.

This is not to minimize the very real stumbling blocks for artists—78% work at more than one job; in 2004, artists have less time to spend on their art than they did 15 years ago and while 84% have health or medical coverage, 31% obtain it themselves and 13% do not obtain routine health care.

The percentage of artists earning money from their art is on the decline (from a high of 86% in 1988 to 77% in 2003) and only 43% of these find that this income covers their art-related expenses. Sixty-three percent earn under \$7,000 from their art and the median gross income from all sources was \$35,000, an income considered low by HUD standards for at least some of the counties studied.

While data and statistics help to form a more balanced picture of occupational groups, the arguments for supporting and nurturing artists in a community cannot be captured solely in numbers. As a society our understanding of how the arts and artists contribute to our daily lives is essential for our own sustenance—from national identity to creative industries, economic impact and local quality of life.

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Rockefeller Foundation), The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and The San Francisco Foundation, this report is the third in a series of studies of Bay Area artists: *Information on Artists* (IOA) was conducted in 1988; *Information on Artists II* (IOA II)¹ in 1997 and the current study, *Information on Artist III* (IOA III) in 2004. IOA III provides important information on Bay Area artists' practices, incomes, income from art, demographic information, education and training, health and medical coverage, pension and welfare, and live/work space realities as well as information on community involvement, with comparisons to the two former studies as well as several others.

A mail survey of 1,000 Bay Area artists was administered in the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma. Lists were gathered with the help of the focus group participants from 18 arts unions, arts service and arts organizations. The survey received a 25% return (246), a large enough sample on most questions to draw conclusions with confidence. The highest percentage of artists identified their areas of major concentration as painting/drawing (22%), theatre (17%) and film (11%).

In all three IOA studies, there are several different questions on the survey that encourage respondents to tell us how they define themselves as artists. Artists were asked which career was most important to them from a list including several choices. Clearly the career of artist is considered the most important to IOA III artists, even higher, at 83%, than in 1997 (77%).

¹ In IOA II two different samples were studied: IOA II Study One looked at artists from the same organizations as IOA I; IOA II Study Two (called Multicultural Artists here) looked at artists from organizations serving primarily a multicultural constituency; we are not confident that the organizations that were able to provide lists to the IOA III study sufficiently address the multicultural community and so we report figures from IOA II Study One and Study Two separately to account for what may be an unintended sampling bias.

Income: About a quarter of the artists earned their major income during the previous year **as artists**. While **fewer artists are earning money through their art**, 77% earn some money from their art. This is 9% lower than fifteen years ago when 86% of artists earned some money from their art. For those who are earning money from their art, that **income is improving**. **There is more money from grants for some artists and by 2003**, the mean grant for Bay Area artists grew to \$8,731---a growth of \$3,500 in fifteen years.

Other Sources of Income: In 2003, 14% of Bay Area artists barter their art, 15% earn money from stocks and bonds, 6% from unemployment and 20% get paid “off the books.” The amount off the books earned by most of those artists showed a mean of \$2,139 and a median of \$1,100; the amount artists reported earning most of the time was a mode of \$2,000.²

Artists are spending less time on their art. While approximately half the artists in all three surveys spend over 20 hours a week on their art, a smaller percentage of 2003 artists work over 40 hours a week on their art (only 14% in IOA III). Also, the number of artists spending over 20 hours a week has been steadily decreasing from 67% in 1988 to 47% in 2004 while the number of artists spending over 20 hours a week on supplementary employment is on the rise (from 53% in 1988 to 57% in 2003). In their comments, artists often expressed the tremendous constraints on their time to do their art.

Artists are staying in the Bay Area to work, live and study. Sixty-nine percent of Bay Area artists have lived in the county of their current residence for more than 10 years; 59% have worked there for the same amount of time. And 65% received some art-related training in the area. This is consistent with all other IOA studies.

² The mean is the average; the median is the point at which 50% of the respondents answer above and 50% below; the mode is the number that appears most frequently.

Demographics: The mean age for artists in the survey is 46; the median age, 47. The median age has risen between 7 and 12 years since 1997, indicating that as the IOA surveys age so do the artists—those who were 40 in 1997 would be 47 in 2004.

The male-female ratio seems to be leveling out a bit with 44% male and 56% female (a change from the 38% male-62% female ratio in 1988). The national statistics for California in 2000 are 50.2% female; for the United States, 50.9% female.

Seventy-six percent of the artists are white, compared to 90% in 1988. U.S. statistics for 2000 show the white non-hispanic population as 49.7% in San Francisco city and county, 59.5% in California and 75.1% in the country.

Education: In every study of artists during the last 20 years artists are shown as highly educated. This study is no exception with 40% college graduates and an additional 42% with graduate degrees. U.S. Census figures for 2003 show 26.6% of the California population and 24.4% of the national population has a Bachelor's degree or higher. The mean age people began training in their art was 16; the median, 15. The mean age people thought they became an artist 23; the median, 22.

Legal Issues: The biggest legal issue is the need for copyright advice. Exactly half of the Bay Area respondents could have used legal expertise between 1 and 3 times in the previous 12 months for their art-related work. This has stayed more or less the same since 1988. The top areas listed where such expertise would have been helpful were copyright (38%), taxation (26%) and contracts (15%). The need for copyright expertise has jumped since 1988 (17%), but decreased a bit for taxation (34%) and contracts (22%).

Credit: Ninety-two percent of the Bay Area artists have at least 1 credit card, but only 11% had it issued to them as artists.

Living and Working Space: A very high proportion of Bay Area artists have both lived and worked in the country of their current residence/workspace for more than 10 years (69% and 59%). For half of the artists, their living and working space are in the same location and this is the preference for 39%. For those who travel between home and work, the average **distance between them is 16 miles**. The U.S. Census lists travel time to commute to work, not miles. The mean travel time to work for workers age 16 or over in California in 2002 was 27.7 minutes in California and 25.5 minutes in the U.S., according to the U.S. Census. Averaging a conservative 50 miles an hour, California drivers are driving 25.5-27.7 miles to get to work compared to artists' 16.

We were able to break out more detailed costs of living and paying for workspace in San Francisco county. Of these residents who represented almost half of IOA III's respondents, 14% paid a monthly cost of \$800-899 per month for workspace; those whose primary workspace was in the city of San Francisco paid \$900 or more per month for workspace as artists, an annual cost of at least \$10,800.

Insurance and Pension: Similar to other RCAC studies, a high percentage (84%) of Bay Area artists have health or medical coverage. **More artists over age 40 tend to have health protection**. Sixty-seven percent of those who said they have health or medical coverage are over age 40. And in at least one area, Bay Area artists seem to be taking better care of themselves: the percentage of overall artists exposed to occupational hazards has declined substantially since 1988. Only 29% of Bay Area artists have life insurance and 65% have at least 1 retirement plan. **There has been growth in the percentage of artists with retirement plans**. This has stayed relatively the same for life insurance since 1988, but has changed substantially for retirement plans—in 1988 only 44%

had retirement plans; by 1997 just over half did (IOA II 55%; IOA II Multicultural 53%).

As we suspected, artists who are union members have more insurance: 86% have health or medical coverage, 31% have life insurance and 66% have retirement plans.

Engagement: Artists are engaged in their communities. Forty-seven percent have volunteered their services and 43% have performed community services, 70% of these for 1-4 hours a week, over the previous 2 years. Eighteen percent have served on a jury, 26% have been active in advocacy organizations, 22% have served on a board of trustees or advisory committee, 7% have written op ed pieces or other essays.

As in IOA II, Bay area artists are involved in the politics of their community: 84% voted in the last Federal and State elections, and 81% in recent local elections. Seventy-three percent are registered Democrats.

Seventy percent say they feel valued as artists. Twenty-eight percent indicate they know this by people who attend their performances; 22% by those who buy their work and 30% say their community regards them a contributing member.

Professional Development Needs: Twenty-five percent of Bay Area artists need professional development in marketing expertise, 17% in how to apply for grants and other funds, 16% in financial expertise and 15% in strengthening their community of artists. Primary constraints were a lack of time and money for half the respondents. A third said that other jobs were too taxing and a quarter mentioned lack of management representation as a constraint.