Basic Income for Artists Programs: Who Are the Artists?

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Abstract

Like other Universal Basic Income or Guaranteed Income programs, a Basic Income for Artists has gained traction in advocacy and policy circles and sparked serious consideration far and wide. While its merits and feasibility are debated, fundamental policy design issues like eligibility rise to the fore. Switching from a universal program to a targeted one prompts the crucial question: who are the artists? We discuss this critical programmatic and policy question and then introduce new evidence from a large, guaranteed income program for artists in New York State. Evidence on 20,000 applicants and over 2,300 participants give us new insights into this population and implications for designing future such programs.

Introduction

The question of "who is an artist?" does not have a straightforward answer. A person might be an artist if they earn income from selling art, or spend time creating art. Alternatively, people can self-identify as artists, culture-makers, or culture bearers, based on their own preferences for how they want themselves to be perceived by others, or even how others perceive them. Since the boundaries between 'who is an artist?' and 'who is not?' are unclear, there are challenges for understanding who engages in arts work.

Most employment data on artists in the U.S. are collected through the U.S. Census Bureau. Specifically, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is the federal statistical agency responsible for collecting information on the employment behavior of Americans. In collecting these data, the BLS uses the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system – an occupational taxonomy to help facilitate comparability across occupational data.

There are various issues with how federal statistical surveys identify artist workers. These issues stem from the fact that the SOC system conceptualizes work differently than do many individual artist workers. The result of these different conceptualizations of work is that Federal Statistical data may not accurately reflect the artistic labor force. For example, as a result of how Federal statistical data generally conceive of workers' 'primary' occupations, it is likely that artist workers are severely undercounted in the 2018 SOC codes for artists since artists frequently hold multiple jobs. As such, statistical estimates of the artistic workforce based on Federal data are likely much smaller than the true size of this workforce.

This paper explores the gap between who artists are and who are officially (federally) designated as artists. Using federal statistical data and comparing these data to a new source – data from the Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) Guaranteed Income for Artists (GIA) program – we identify gaps in how federal statistical data define artists. The results illustrate a substantial segment of the U.S. artistic workforce not recognized in federal data that contribute to the artistic economy. This study gives us important insights about "who is an artist?" and implications of various answers for design of future Basic Income (BI) for artist programs.

Defining Artists

Though the SOC system of classification is a widely utilized taxonomy, it is not insulated from the extensive definitional problems associated with the concept of an arts worker. Within the Federal government, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is the primary user of the SOC system to quantify data on artist workers. The NEA has issued several reports using the SOC system to understand the size of the artistic labor market, as well as characteristics of artist workers in the U.S. (e.g., NEA, 2019), and has set the standard for how to classify artists in the SOC system based on the current codes – a standard that is followed by researchers, state and local governments, and nonprofit organizations to understand the U.S. artistic labor market (e.g., Paulsen et al., 2020, Woronkowicz and Noonan, 2019).

Artist occupational categories fall within two major categories in the SOC system (i.e., Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports; and Media Occupations and Architecture and Engineering Occupations) and four minor categories (i.e., Architects, Surveyors, and Cartographers; Art and Design Workers; Entertainers and Performers, Sports and Related Workers; and Media and Communication Equipment Workers). The SOC codes to classify artists used by the NEA and other entities typically cover ten broad categories that include twenty-six detailed occupational codes. Table 1 lists the NEA categories, alongside the SOC detailed occupation codes and definitions.

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¹ In another phase of this study, we are evaluating the effects of the GIA program on artists with respect to various outcomes, including work, well-being, and financial stability. The results of this study will be available in a report to Creatives Rebuild New York in the Fall of 2024.

Table 1. NEA Artist Occupations Matched to SOC Detailed Occupation Codes

NEA Artist Occupation	Detailed Occupation SOC Code	Detailed Occupation Title	Definition
Actors	27-2011	Actors	Play parts in stage, television, radio, video, or film productions, or other settings for entertainment, information, or instruction. Interpret serious or comic role by speech, gesture, and body movement to entertain or inform audience. May dance and sing.
Announcers	27-2091	Disc Jockeys, Except Radio	Play prerecorded music for live audiences at venues or events such as clubs, parties, or wedding receptions. May use techniques such as mixing, cutting, or sampling to manipulate recordings. May also perform as emcee (master of ceremonies). Radio disc jockeys are included in "Broadcast Announcers and Radio Disc Jockeys" (27-3011). Excludes "Musicians and Singers" (27-2042), "Audio and Video Technicians" (27-4011), and "Sound Engineering Technicians" (27-4014).
Announcers	27-3011	Broadcast Announcers and Radio Disc Jockeys	Speak or read from scripted materials, such as news reports or commercial messages, on radio, television, or other communications media. May play and queue music, announce artist or title of performance, identify station, or interview guests. Excludes "News Analysts, Reporters, and Journalists" (27-3023).
Architects	17-1011	Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	Plan and design structures, such as private residences, office buildings, theaters, factories, and other structural property. Excludes "Landscape Architects" (17-1012) and "Marine Engineers and Naval Architects" (17-2121).
Architects	17-1012	Landscape Architects	Plan and design land areas for projects such as parks and other recreational facilities, airports, highways, hospitals, schools, land subdivisions, and commercial, industrial, and residential sites.
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	27-1011	Art Directors	Formulate design concepts and presentation approaches for visual productions and media, such as print, broadcasting, video, and film. Direct workers engaged in artwork or layout design. Excludes "Set and Exhibit Designers" (27-1027).
Fine artists, art directors, and	27-1012	Craft Artists	Create or reproduce handmade objects for sale and exhibition using a variety of techniques, such as welding, weaving, pottery, and needlecraft.

animators			
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	27-1013	Fine Artists, Including Painters, Sculptors, and Illustrators	Create original artwork using any of a wide variety of media and techniques.
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	27-1014	Special Effects Artists and Animators	Create special effects or animations using film, video, computers, or other electronic tools and media for use in products, such as computer games, movies, music videos, and commercials.
Fine artists, art directors, and animators	27-1019	Artists and Related Workers, All Other	All artists and related workers not listed separately.
Dancers and choreographers	27-2031	Dancers	Perform dances. May perform on stage, for broadcasting, or for video recording.
Dancers and choreographers	27-2032	Choreographers	Create new dance routines. Rehearse performance of routines. May direct and stage presentations.
Designers	27-1021	Commercial and Industrial Designers	Design and develop manufactured products, such as cars, home appliances, and children's toys. Combine artistic talent with research on product use, marketing, and materials to create the most functional and appealing product design.
Designers	27-1022	Fashion Designers	Design clothing and accessories. Create original designs or adapt fashion trends.
Designers	27-1023	Floral Designers	Design, cut, and arrange live, dried, or artificial flowers and foliage.
Designers	27-1024	Graphic Designers	Design or create graphics to meet specific commercial or promotional needs, such as packaging, displays, or logos. May use a variety of mediums to achieve artistic or decorative effects. Excludes "Web and Digital Interface Designers" (15-1255).
Designers	27-1025	Interior Designers	Plan, design, and furnish the internal space of rooms or buildings. Design interior environments or create physical layouts that are practical, aesthetic, and conducive to the intended purposes. May specialize in a particular field, style, or phase of interior design. Excludes "Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers" (27-1026).

Designers	27-1026	Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	Plan and erect commercial displays, such as those in windows and interiors of retail stores and at trade exhibitions.
Designers	27-1027	Set and Exhibit Designers	Design special exhibits and sets for film, video, television, and theater productions. May study scripts, confer with directors, and conduct research to determine appropriate architectural styles.
Designers	27-1029	Designers, All Other	All designers not listed separately.
Other entertainers	27-2099	Entertainers and Performers, Sports and Related Workers, All Other	All entertainers and performers, sports and related workers not listed separately.
Musicians, singers, and related workers	27-2041	Music Directors and Composers	Conduct, direct, plan, and lead instrumental or vocal performances by musical artists or groups, such as orchestras, bands, choirs, and glee clubs; or create original works of music.
Musicians, singers, and related workers	27-2042	Musicians and Singers	Play one or more musical instruments or sing. May perform on stage, for broadcasting, or for sound or video recording.
Photographers	27-4021	Photographers	Photograph people, landscapes, merchandise, or other subjects. May use lighting equipment to enhance a subject's appearance. May use editing software to produce finished images and prints. Includes commercial and industrial photographers, scientific photographers, and photojournalists. Excludes "Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Film" (27-4031).
Producers and directors	27-2012	Producers and Directors	Produce or direct stage, television, radio, video, or film productions for entertainment, information, or instruction. Responsible for creative decisions, such as interpretation of script, choice of actors or guests, set design, sound, special effects, and choreography.
Writers and authors	27-3043	Writers and Authors	Originate and prepare written material, such as scripts, stories, advertisements, and other material. Excludes "News Analysts, Reporters, and Journalists" (27-3023), "Public Relations Specialists" (27-3031), and "Technical Writers" (27-3042).

The unique definitional problems associated with artistic occupations can be traced to the openness of the concept of artistic work. The natural screening devices that exist for other occupations, like the M.D. degree and C.P.A. designation, are extremely useful for classifying a population of workers, but these devices cannot be identified with comparable devices for demarcating artist workers (Wassall and Alper, 1985). There is no certification that is necessary for working as an artist. Unlike other occupations, in which natural screening devices play a central role in definition, the nature of an artistic occupation may be best understood as one without a discrete essence on which researchers might fasten their systems of classification. There are no necessary and sufficient conditions for being employed as an artist. Instead, the concept of an artistic occupation appears to pick out a set of occupations that meet various criteria, none of which are fulfilled by all instantiations of the kind.

The absence of natural screening devices is not unique to artist workers. However, it appears to be especially problematic for counting and taxonomizing these members of the workforce because attempts to employ what could be called "artificial" screening devices—like quality of artistic work or membership in artists' groups or organizations—can cause researchers to include workers that are not consistent with other researchers' and governmental classification. In the absence of natural screening devices, researchers often turn to combinations of alternative criteria with the aim of approximating such a device. The most comprehensive list of these criteria is provided by Frey and Pommerehne (1989), who identify eight criteria commonly used when attempting to delimit a population of artist workers:

- 1. the amount of time spent on artistic work
- 2. the amount of income derived from artistic activities
- 3. the reputation as an artist among the general public
- 4. the recognition among other artists
- 5. the quality of artistic work produced
- 6. membership in a professional artists' group or association
- 7. professional qualifications
- 8. the subjective self-evaluation of being an artist

Some approaches to analysis might stand outside this list, but these criteria make up the bulk of attempts to define who counts as an artist worker. Experimentation with these criteria and combinations thereof reveals their strengths and weaknesses for defining artistic occupations.

Menger (1999) identifies four factors that contribute to a competitive and turbulent artistic labor market, and therefore may problematize definition: (1) the value of artistic products depends on originality, (2) many endeavors (particularly in the performing arts) depend on a variety of artistic skill sets, (3) tastes undergo unpredictable shifts, and (4) uncertainty is a fundamental characteristic of the creative process. These features of arts work ensure that the concept of an artist worker is ever-changing and may account for why artistic occupations are uniquely difficult to define and why no essence of the occupation can be located.

Wassall and Alper (1985) argue that the Census approach is unequipped to reveal information about people on the "fringe" of the artistic profession. The Census' definition is inconsistent with the definition of artist adopted by many researchers in the field and the Census' focus on primary occupation will fail to capture the significant population of artists who devote the majority of their work hours to a non-arts occupation. To explore revision to classification of artist workers, they

employ the following screening devices in an attempt to delimit the population: INCOME (was any income derived from artistic work?); IRS (does artistic income exceed artistic expenses?); UNION (was this person in one or more performing arts unions?; ONLYART (does this person hold only artistic jobs?); ARTIST: (is artistry this person's "principal profession"?). This combination of criteria allows researchers to divide artists into groups that signify "more or less success in and/or commitment to their profession."

Baldin and Bille (2021) adopt a similar approach. They observe that the widespread use of relatively permissive criteria leads to a heterogenous group of artists that includes people who have not and do not plan to pursue art as their primary occupation. This is preferable to the exclusion of people who pursue art as a secondary job, but it suggests a division of the heterogeneous group into latent classes on the basis of professionalism. Since, in their view, the theoretical discourse is best understood as centering on a question of where to draw the boundary between "professional" and "amateur" artists, dividing artists into groups of professionals and nonprofessionals throws light on who counts as an artist in the relevant sense. Baldin and Bille (2021) express doubts that professional qualifications in the form of formal education in arts programs are useful indicators of whether one works in the arts. On the basis of these criteria, they divide their population of artists into six classes ranging in degree of professionalism: (1) Devoted to arts or Professional, (2) Subsidized artists, (3) Aspiring artists, (4) Arts as a hobby (or secondary activity), (5) Senior, and (6) Workers related to the arts. They do not decisively rule out any of these classes, but their partitioning lays the foundation for architects of taxonomies of artist workers to do so.

Lena and Lindemann (2014) explore the subjectivist approach to defining artist workers—on which the definition is based on self-identification—finding that there exists a significant dissonance group who claim to have held artistic occupations but do not claim to be professional artists. They utilize the findings of the 2010 Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) survey of people who pursued arts degrees in the United States to attempt to define the professional artist, rendering this title the dependent rather than independent variable. They consider the possibilities that this dissonance group can be explained by (1) human error, (2) the fact that some arts-related occupations are not treated as professional artist jobs by the survey, (3) the existence of a distinction between "commercial" and "pure" art among designers, or (4) respondents' "faulty memory" about their professions. The entirety of the dissonance group cannot be captured by employing each of these potential explanations or a combination thereof. Instead, a potential explanation for the dissonance group relies on investigation of the delicate nature of the occupational identity of the artist. Artistic identity is dependent on social embeddedness in artistic communities, geographic location, and myths about identity and practice held by the general public, so and identification with the occupation does not always align with ordinary career milestones (Lena and Lindemann, 2014; Bain, 2005; Makemson, 2020); given these distinctive features of artistic identity, the existence of a dissonance group is somewhat unsurprising. Further, Lena and Lindemann's work reveals that the subjectivist approach administered in isolation is unlikely to succeed at accurately capturing a population of artist workers because people who meet various criteria for being an artist worker still may not self-identify with that occupation or profession. However, as Menger (1999) notes, the selfidentification criterion is a powerful tool for representing the persistence of commitment to occupational identity even when career change occurs.

Data and Analysis

As of 2024, there are several ongoing and recently completed GI pilots in the U.S., many supported by private philanthropy, and some of which include public funding.² There are also now several GI pilot programs targeting artists in the United States.³ Evaluations of the various GI programs are beginning to show the effects that these pilots have had on participants with many having found overall positive effects for people receiving GI.⁴ Yet mixed results emerge from some analyses, reflecting in part the participants' heterogeneity and differing needs combining with the unfocused or flexible nature of the no-strings-attached transfers (Miller et al., 2024; Vivalt et al. 2024).

In 2022, Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) launched the Guaranteed Income for Artists (GIA) program that would provide 2,400 artists with monthly, no-strings-attached, cash payments of \$1,000 for 18 months. Specifically, the goals of the program were to 1) help artists recover from the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on both their work and personal lives; 2) advance policy that would help support the financial sustainability of artists over the long-term; and 3) prioritize artists who came from the most disadvantaged backgrounds in the pursuit of CRNY's goals. The idea that GI could potentially help CRNY achieve these goals stemmed from the understanding that these programs are effective mechanisms for reducing precarity, especially among the most vulnerable populations.

This analysis uses application and survey data collected through CRNY's GIA program. The analysis also uses data from the 2018-2022 (5-year pooled file) American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2022 (March Basic File) Current Population Survey (CPS). The former is considered to be the best source of data on occupations. The latter includes additional information useful to understanding occupational identification for artists in the SOC system. Both data sources produce comparable estimates; however, the ACS has a larger sample size than the CPS, generally resulting in more precise statistical estimates.⁶

Both the ACS and CPS use detailed occupation SOC codes for identifying workers. However, in some instances where the sample size in a detailed code is too small to report anonymously, the data source aggregates up to the broad category. This applies to the following detailed occupation codes for artists: art directors; craft artists; fine artists, including painters, sculptors, and illustrators; and special effects artists and animators (aggregated up to Artists and Related Workers); dancers;

² Notably, the city of Stockton, California was the first city to launch a GI program (SEED) in 2018 that targeted 125 people living in neighborhoods at or below the median household income and provided them with monthly \$500 payments for two years. Other cities have launched similar programs.

³ These include a program led by the organization Springboard for the Arts in St. Paul, Minnesota and another led by the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco.

⁴ Studies of several recent GI pilot programs have reported positive effects on participants' financial wellbeing, mental health, self-reported physical health, and food security. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique backdrop for several of these studies. For example, Chelsea Eats and the Paterson Guaranteed Income Pilot Program (GIPP) are two programs launched by cities in response to COVID-19. The Stockton GI pilot program (SEED) covered periods both before and during the pandemic. Research on all three of these programs have found that the receipt of GI had a positive impact on participants' ability to cope with the challenges that COVID-19 introduced, with evidence of greater savings, lower income volatility, and lower levels of financial distress compared to control groups who did not receive GI benefits (DeYoung et al., 2024; Dwyer et al., 2023; West and Castro, 2024; Liebman et al., 2022)

⁵ Frasz (2024) includes in an in-depth description of CRNY's GIA program, including how the program prioritized applicants in selecting participants.

⁶ See https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/data-sources/acs-vs-cps.html#:~:text=The%20income%20questions%20in%20the,of%20all%20potential%20income%20sources for a description of the differences between the ACS and the CPS.

choreographers (aggregated up to Dancers and Choreographers); and set and exhibit designers (aggregated up to Designers). As a result, the full set of detailed occupation codes of artists includes 26 separate categories, whereas this analysis uses 20 separate categories.

Between 2018 and 2022, there were on average 3,080,704 workers identified in primary arts occupations in the ACS. This represents around 1% of the total U.S labor force. Figure 1 illustrates both the total and percentage of workers by detailed occupation in the artistic workforce.

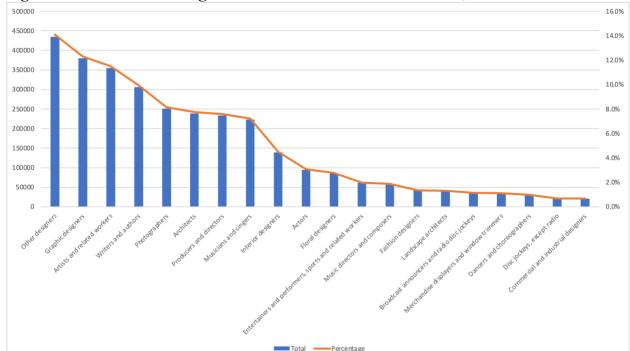


Figure 1. Total and Percentage of Workers in the Artistic Workforce, 2018-2022

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, <u>www.ipums.org</u>, 2018-2022 American Community Survey (5-year pooled data)

We begin the main analysis by comparing the information on artists collected from GIA applicants and participants to information on artists collected by the U.S. Census Bureau data to determine the differences between these groups.

In total, 21,921 eligible people applied for the GIA program. The GIA data rely on self-reported information provided by the applicants. The eligibility criteria considered whether the applicant identifies as an artist, culture bearer, or culture maker, is above 18 years old, and resides in New York

State.⁷ Applicants also had to fall below a certain income threshold for self-sufficiency.⁸ The application also collected information on a variety of priority criteria that CRNY used to conduct a weighted lottery to select the GIA program participants. Additional, equal weights were applied for each criteria applicants met among non-white race identity, trans- or multi-gender, LGBTQIAP identity, disability, serving as a caregiver, identifying as an immigrant, history in the justice system, rural community, and lacking a financial safety net. In total, 2,378 artists were randomly selected for the GIA program. The 2022 CPS data included 10,109 artists also over the age of 18 and residing in New York State. Already, it is important to note that number of respondents in the CRNY application data is *twice the size* of the respondents in the CPS, a general population survey of the entire state, reflecting a substantial mismatch between the artists reflected in each data source.

Table 2 compares key characteristics across the three groups of artists: (i) those identified as (adult, New York resident) artists in the federal data (CPS Artists), (ii) eligible applicants to the GIA program (GIA Applicants), and (iii) selected participants (GIA Participants). Table 2 shows the characteristics of artists in each dataset in terms of their demographic and economic characteristics. The data collected show that 41.7% of applicants identified as female, 39.1% as male, and the remaining 17% self-identified as multi-gender. Those identifying as multi-gender encompass individuals who self-identify as "Non-binary," "Two-spirit," or provide an alternative explanation besides the "Female" and "Male" answers. Further, the GI questionnaire results show that 31.7% of applicants identify as White, 20.5% identify themselves as Black or African American, followed by 20.1% of applicants identify as Multi-Race.

Table 2. Characteristics of Artists in the GIA Program and the CPS

Characteristics	GIA Applicants	GIA Participants	CPS Artists
Female	0.42	0.42	0.49
Male	0.39	0.35	0.51
Multi-gender	0.17	0.23	N/A
White	0.32	0.29	0.85
Arab or Middle Eastern	0.02	0.01	N/A
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.08	0.09	0.06
Black or African American	0.20	0.20	0.06
Hispanic or Latinx	0.12	0.11	0.10
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0.00	0.00	0.00
Indigenous American, First Nation, or Alaska Native	0.01	0.02	0.01

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⁷ "Creatives Rebuild New York defines an artist, culture bearer, or culture maker ('artist') as someone who regularly engages in artistic or cultural practice to: express themselves with the intention of communicating richly to or sharing with others; pass on traditional knowledge and cultural practices; offer cultural resources to their communities; and/or co-organize and co-create within communities toward social impacts. Artists aspire to sustain themselves through their practice and maintain a commitment to continuing their practice. Artists can work both individually and collaboratively, or as educators within their field of practice." https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/how-crny-defines-artist/

⁸ The Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS), developed by Dianna Pearce in 1996 (Pearce & Brooks, 2000), offers an alternative method for measuring financial needs. SSS allows for greater flexibility in accounting for different types of expenses, household compositions, and geographic locations, making it a valuable tool for assessing financial needs overlooked by federal poverty guidelines.

⁹ There are important distinctions between how data are measured in the CRNY and the CPS. The CPS data lack details on gender identity beyond binary classifications, interactions with the justice system, and detailed safety net-related data. Also, the CPS data do not directly obtain information regarding an individual's caregiving roles, or explicit LGBTQIAP identification. See the Appendix Table A.1 for definitions of how each characteristic was measured in the CRNY and CPS data to make the comparisons here.

Multi-race	0.20	0.23	0.02
Caregiver	0.32	0.42	0.27
Justice	0.04	0.07	N/A
Immigrant	0.20	0.21	0.13
Rural	0.06	0.15	0.12
Disability	0.11	0.17	0.05
Lack of Safety Net	0.92	0.95	N/A
LGBTQIAP	0.48	0.52	0.01
Number of Artists	21,921	2,378	10,109

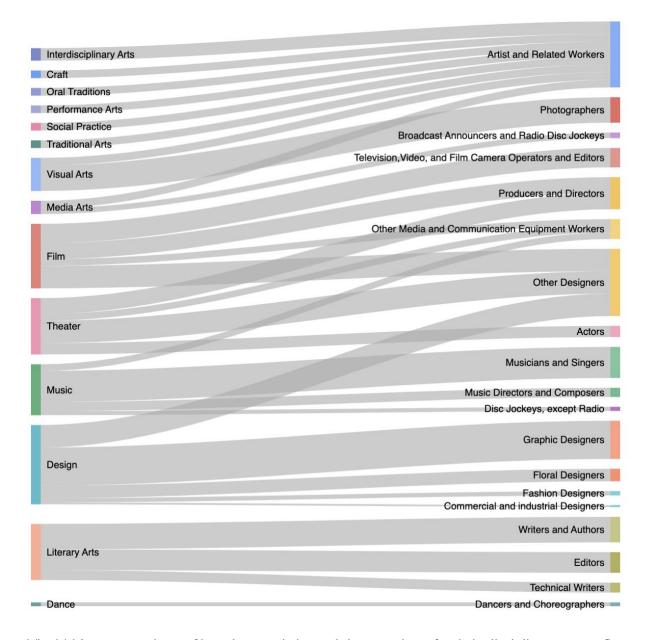
There are immediate differences in Table 2 between GIA and CPS artists in terms of their characteristics. First, GIA artists are less likely to identify as male than CPS artists. A partial reason for this is because the CPS only provides two options for gender. Second, GIA artists are much less likely to be white and much more likely to be Black or African American compared to CPS artists. GIA applicant artists are also less likely to live in a rural region than CPS artists. Finally, GIA artists are much more likely to be immigrants than CPS artists, are more likely to have a disability, and more likely to identify as LGBTQIAP. While not shown in the table, we also compare the age and household income between GIA and CPS artists. On average, GIA applicant artists have much lower household incomes and are younger than artists in the CPS. This is, of course, to be expected and is by design, because GIA eligibility required income below the Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS) (Pearce & Brooks, 2000).

We also compare the artistic disciplines of GIA applicants and CPS artists. Artistic discipline is not consistently measured between the two datasets, so we create a mapping of disciplines between the datasets. Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of artists in each respective discipline according to the way each data source defined the discipline. The left-hand side of Figure 1 holds the discipline categories used by the GIA, while the right-hand side shows those used in the CPS. This visualization shows the different categorizations in the GIA versus CPS and how they map onto each other. It shows, for instance, how some literary arts categorizations are more detailed in the CPS, while the CPS occupation grouping of "artist and related workers" is more richly differentiated in the GIA (among visual arts, craft, oral traditions, etc.). Some disciplines (e.g., music) in GIA or occupations (e.g., producers and directors) in CPS map onto a variety of occupations or disciplines, respectively.¹⁰

Figure 1. Discipline Alignment between GIA Applicants and CPS Artists

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¹⁰ See Table A.2 in the Appendix that shows the proportional breakdown of how GIA and CPS artistic occupations compare.



The Table 2 comparison of key characteristics and the mapping of artistic disciplines are our first indications that the GIA program addressed a particular set of artists. The GIA program artists' demographic and economic characteristics diverge substantially from what we know about artists from the CPS data. Overall, the GIA program attracted artists to its applicant pool and then selected participants who were much more likely to come from vulnerable populations. Further, they tended to attract artists with a rather different profile of artistic disciplines. This 'misalignment' likely derives from dual forces of CPS occupation-based definitions and GIA's targeting of more socially vulnerable artists.

¹¹ It is important to keep in mind that one of the goals of the GIA program was to target vulnerable populations. To do so, CRNY applied income eligibility requirements (not present in the CPS) and used a method to prioritize applicants based on different criteria to identify the most vulnerable groups. See Frasz (2024) for a detailed explanation of this method and the details of the GIA program.

Table 3 reports some descriptive statistics for a few survey questions that help classify respondents as artists. The survey data include 5,699 GIA Applicant respondents (1,315 of which were GIA participants), answering questions about artistic work. These questions roughly match with definitions 1, 2, 4, 5, and 8 from the list of alternative definitions from Frey and Pommerehne (1989). Various measures for 'time spent on artistic work' include a stricter definition (i.e., spent time working on an artistic or cultural practice in the past month) a looser definition (i.e., spent time on artistic practice or other arts-related work in the past 12 months) and a several alternatives in between. In terms of spending time on arts-related work, 97 - 99% of the GIA Applicants qualify as artists. Similarly, a very high proportion of them qualify as artists based on earning income as an artist. Over 89% report earning income from artistic practice in the past year, while even more report an income from arts-related work. Finally, 13% report receiving recognition (i.e., prize, award, fellowship) for their artistic practice, 82% were not dissatisfied with their artwork quality, and almost 97% self-identified as an artist. As shown in Table 3, these proportions were slightly different for the GIA Participants subsample. The t-tests show that the means tended to be slightly higher for the GIA Participants, except for the income-based definitions, where Participants tended to have slightly lower means than Applicants. Given that the GIA lottery was weighted to disproportionately select socially vulnerable applicants, we also tested for differences in means conditional on the weighting factors. In most definitions, the GIA participants were a few more percentage points more likely to qualify as an artist. Interestingly, they were much more likely to not be dissatisfied with the quality of their work and less likely to report earning income from other (arts-related) work. Overall, the eligibility and selection criteria employed by CRNY can be shown to capture applicants and participants who overwhelmingly tended to qualify as artists across a variety of definitions. How well they fit with other definitions, like receiving recognition by the public or professional qualifications, cannot be tested with the CRNY data.

Table 3: Share of Artists for Alternative Definitions

	GIA	GIA				CPS
Sample:	Applicants	Participan	nts			Artists
Definition	mean	mean	t	coeff.	t	mean
Spent time >0 on any arts-related work in past 12 months	0.967	0.979	2.79	0.018	3.59	0.918
Spent time >0 on artistic practice in past 12 months	0.948	0.967	3.40	0.028	4.43	
Spent time >0 on other (arts-related) work in past 12 months	0.722	0.743	1.83	0.032	2.19	
Spent time >0 on any arts-related work in past 1 month	0.989	0.993	1.58	0.008	2.49	
Spent time >0 on artistic practice in past 1 month	0.969	0.983	3.20	0.019	4.09	
Spent time >0 on other (arts-related) work in past 1 month	0.644	0.673	2.48	0.046	3.10	
Earned income from arts-related work in past 12 months	0.971	0.961	-2.48	-0.011	-1.88	1.000
Earned income from artistic work in past 12 months	0.891	0.880	-1.53	-0.010	-1.02	
Earned income from other (arts-related) work in past 12 months	0.898	0.860	-5.23	-0.045	-4.24	
Received a prize, award, prize, or fellowship for artistic practice in the past 12 months	0.129	0.140	1.32	0.012	1.09	N/A
Not dissatisfied with the quality of artwork in the past 12 months	0.824	0.886	6.52	0.084	7.47	N/A
Do you identify as an artist, culture-bearer, or culture-maker?	0.968	0.976	1.86	0.010	1.97	N/A

CIA

CDC

Note: CPS mean work time is the share of adult artists (NY, 2022) not unemployed. CPS mean earned income is the share of adult artists (NY, 2022) reporting wages or salary income greater than zero. t-statistics in *italics*, **bold**, and *bold-italics* represent significant values at the 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01 levels, respectively.

To assess the extent to which these characteristics of the GIA Participants group are the result of this particular lottery run by CRNY, and not a more general feature of the eligible artist population, we conducted simulations to better understand how a GIA program could potentially target vulnerable groups of artists not receiving public assistance. We conducted simulations to help us determine the probability of CPS artists in New York State being selected as if they had applied to the GIA program. Our simulations mirrored the GIA selection process based on its prioritization factors. We employed a statistical technique called a Monte Carlo Analysis. The analysis involves calculating the probability of being selected into the GIA program based on the set of priority selection variables. Since the CPS data do not have the same information that CRNY used to select program participants, we used an alternative set of information that closely mimics the GIA selection criteria. This information includes whether someone is non-white, lives in a rural area, is a caregiver, has a disability, identifies as LGBTQIAP, and is an immigrant. The Monte Carlo analysis calculates the probability of being selected into the GIA program 1,000 times using distinct sets of randomly generated data from the CPS.

The results from the simulations reflect the GIA program model's placing greater weight on certain applicants based on its set of prioritization factors, thus consistently demonstrating the program's commitment to supporting a diverse and underserved set of artists. Specifically, the simulations result in a greater probability of selection for non-White populations, immigrants, and caregivers, and a slight inclination for individuals living in rural areas and those with disabilities. Moreover, the simulated selection process results in a greater share of artists receiving public assistance than what we see in the federal statistical data. In conclusion, a GI program modeled on CRNY's GIA would tend to select artists already on public assistance at a much higher rate than is evident in the population. And, even for a program prioritizing artists from vulnerable groups, the low level of coverage by existing public assistance programs suggests great potential for a GIA to identify artists who fall in the gap between financial need and access to public assistance programs.

The GIA Applicants and Participants compose a rather different group than the CPS Artists on a number of socioeconomic dimensions, but how well the GIA Participants reflect artists – in other senses of the term – remains less clear. After all, the CRNY eligibility criteria may not align with other definitions of artists.

Discussion and Conclusion

The data and analysis presented in this paper consider the definitions of artists, and those definitions applied to the feasibility of GI programs for artists. Regarding the former, the apparent absence of essence among artist occupations suggests that a *family resemblance* approach to defining artist workers might be appropriate. Wittgenstein (1958) argues that a concept is unified by family resemblance when there is nothing that is common to all entities captured by the concept; in absence of an essence, we instead see "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing." This

¹² Since very few artists in the 2022 CPS data report receiving public assistance, we ran these simulations using a larger set of data drawn from the CPS in years 2010-2023.

mode of analysis has been utilized successfully in aesthetics in attempts to identify what counts as *art* (Warburton, 2003), so it could be useful for conceptualizing artist workers. Many researchers are cognizant of the absence of a screening device that could serve as an essence of the concept of an artist worker (namely Wassall, Alper, Baldin, and Bille), so their analyses can be characterized as family resemblance approaches.

To date, researchers have recognized that an anti-essentialist approach to understanding artistic occupations is warranted, but direct embrace of family resemblance-style analysis could yield dynamic and appropriately inclusive systems of classification. If this is right, analysis should begin with cases of occupation that could not plausibly fall outside the taxonomy (e.g., individuals who devote most of their working hours to artistic practice or derive most of their income from artistic practice) and ascertain the frequency of fulfillment of supplementary criteria (perhaps recognition among other artists or self-identification with the occupational identity of artist, though there is disagreement on what counts as relevant criteria). Armed with this information, one could compare the frequencies of fulfillment of criteria between groups that *must* be included in the taxonomy and groups whose inclusion is up for debate. If frequency of fulfillment is identical or sufficiently similar between these groups, then family resemblance is established, and both groups should be treated as artistic workers. On the other hand, if the frequencies are dissimilar, the second group should not be treated as artistic workers.

In regards to the latter, the results of the comparative analysis show us that the set of artists that both applied to and were selected for the GIA program are a very different set of artists than what we see in employment data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. The artists associated with the GIA program differ significantly in terms of their demographics and economic circumstances, and even in terms of the artistic mediums in which they make their livings through art. What we see then from even a simple comparison is that there is a population of artists that we likely miss if we only pay attention to the artists who report on their primary occupation, like the artists we see in the Census Bureau data.

What we also see from this analysis is that the artists that both applied for and were selected for the GIA program tended to come from more vulnerable groups than the artists in the Census data. The GIA's ability to overcome limitations in the current 'social safety net' program is an essential feature of the program. Critics of public assistance programs have argued that complicated eligibility criteria are inadequately aligned with the complexities of contemporary life, leaving many who need support outside of the social safety net. Moreover, GI has been touted to overcome the limitations of public assistance programs in terms of addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and their ability to access these programs. Of the 2,378 artists selected for CRNY's GI program, just over 26% reported receiving public assistance despite also falling below the SSS income threshold. In the CPS, only 10% of artists indicate being on public assistance. The fact that more than seventy percent of GIA artists did not report receiving public assistance, but still fell below the Self Sufficiency Standard, indicates that there exists a profound social welfare gap among these individuals that the

¹³ For example, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) use certain poverty thresholds to determine eligibility for these programs, but fail to consider changes in household expenses that affect these thresholds and who ultimately qualifies (Pearce & Brooks, 2000; Rossi & Curtis, 2013)

¹⁴ For example, work requirements for public welfare assistance disproportionately affect specific demographic groups, particularly immigrants and racial minorities, perpetuating social inequalities (Schneider & Ingram, 2005; Lanford & Quadagno, 2022; Wikle et al., 2022).

GIA program aimed to fill. Our simulations show the efficacy of GIA's priority criteria in targeting artists not already covered by public assistance programs, which in theory could be extended to a much broader population of artists in need of financial assistance.

Analysis of the CRNY administrative data and a survey of their applicants reveals much about their approach to selecting participants for the GIA program. They successfully selected a disproportionately high number of socially vulnerable artists, even after applying a strict income eligibility criteria. Further, the CRNY's very inclusive and subjective approach to defining artists — where applicants self-identified and the threshold for qualifying as having an artistic practice did not use criteria like hours worked, professional qualifications, earning income or recognition — has yielded a group of applicants that qualify as "artists" by a variety of definitions. The GIA participants generally fit these definitions even more than the non-selected applicants. GIA applicants tended to be drawn from a different set of disciplines than those represented in the broader population of artists as identified in federal statistics. But the comparison is clouded by the different categorization schemes used in data collection. GIA applicants had more media arts, visual artists, dance, and music than CPS artists, while CPA artists in New York had more in design, literary arts, and theater.

There are, however, limitations to these analyses having to do with who we are ultimately able to see in these two different sets of data. It is clear from the data that the artists in the U.S. Census Bureau are not representative of the population of artists working in New York State, and likely across the U.S. The data we have on GIA applicants and participants give us a glimpse of who the Census data are likely missing or fail to represent based on narrow ways of measuring characteristics like gender and sexual identity. Yet, there are other artists that did not apply for the GIA program, that may or may not show up in the Census data, who could give us an even better picture of the artistic workforce in New York State, and help us answer the question of 'who is an artist?' Perhaps these artists are those who we see in the Census data, but perhaps they are not. Getting a glimpse into the demographic and economic profiles of these individuals could help us better understand the extent to which a program like GIA could help support individuals building lives in the arts.

Future BIA programs would do well to carefully consider the implications of alternative definitions of artists in determining eligibility. Further, targeting of BIA to specific types of artists or socioeconomic groups will have implications for which artists benefit from the program. In the case of GIA, the SSS income threshold excluded many artists while still preserving a large and diverse set of eligible applicants. Self-identification and self-selection remained important in determining who constitutes this pool of artists. CRNY's decision to avoid definitions based on professional, commercial, or economic success was essential to their prioritizing of socially and economically vulnerable artists. Yet despite making eligibility independent of artistic work or income, and despite a lottery system designed to over-select socially vulnerable artists, GIA applicants and participants overwhelmingly qualify as artists by those metrics. Based on the CRNY experience, future BIA program designers should enjoy the flexibility of allowing applicants to self-identify as artists. The greatest challenge, it seems, is not in identifying the artists but in securing sufficient funding to support all the eligible applicants.

In sum, CRNY's GIA program has brought attention to a set of the most vulnerable artists living in New York State, many of whom lack the social safety net needed to persist in an artistic occupation. But there is still a long way to go. The GIA pilot was a temporary measure to provide financial support to a small group of individuals, many of whom fall between the cracks of potentially being

eligible for and receiving public assistance. What we need are more long-term solutions to not only the lack of information on who comprises the artists who need support, but also to the lack of a policy infrastructure which recognizes the array of ways that artists are defined. These solutions can ultimately help New York State maintain and grow its artistic workforce.

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Appendix:

Table A.1. Definitions of Measures for CRNY and CPS Data

CRNY	Definition	CPS	Definition
Female	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Woman", 0 otherwise.	Female	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if identified as "Female", 0 otherwise.
Male	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Man", 0 otherwise.	Male	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if identified as "Male", 0 otherwise.
Multi-gender	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Two-binary", "Non-binary", or "Other" besides only "Man" and "Woman", 0 otherwise.	N/A (Not directly comparable)	N/A (CPS does not directly capture multi-gender identification)
White	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "White", 0 otherwise.	White Only	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if individuals answer race identity as "White Only", 0 otherwise.
Arab or Middle Eastern	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Arab or Middle Eastern", 0 otherwise.	N/A (Not directly comparable)	N/A (CPS does not specifically capture Arab or Middle Eastern identification)
Asian or Pacific Islander	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Asian or Pacific Islander", 0 otherwise.	Asian Only	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if identified as "Asian Only", 0 otherwise.
Black or African American	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Black or African American", 0 otherwise.	Black Only	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if identified as "Black Only", 0 otherwise.
Hispanic or Latinx	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Hispanic or Latinx", 0 otherwise.	Hispanic Origin	CPS captures Hispanic identification separately, and many of those individuals also identify as "White Only", "Black Only" in race.
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian", 0 otherwise.	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Only	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if identified as "Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Only", 0 otherwise.
Indigenous American, First Nation, or Alaska	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Indigenous American, First Nation, or Alaska Native", 0 otherwise.	American Indian, Alaska Native Only	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if identified as "American Indian, Alaska Native Only", 0 otherwise.
Native	Demonstration of the second of	Multi-race	December 1 is identified with
Multi-race	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as "Other" or choose more than one single race option, 0 otherwise.	Wuiti-race	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if identified with more than one single race option, 0 otherwise.
Caregiver	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant answered "Yes" to providing care to others, 0 if answered "No".	Caregiver	Dummy variable that equals to 1 if have children under 18 years old, 0 otherwise.
Justice	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant answered "Yes" to having any past criminal legal system involvement, 0 if answered "No".	N/A (Not directly comparable	N/A (CPS does not directly capture past criminal legal system involvement)
Immigrant Identity	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as an immigrant to the U.S., 0 otherwise.	Immigrant Identity	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if individuals identify a year of immigrant's year of entry, 0 otherwise.
Rural	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant described the community they live in as "Rural", 0 if described as "Suburban", "Urban", or "Tribal".	Rural	Dummy variable that equals to 1 if lives in MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area), 0 otherwise.
Disability	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as Deaf or disabled, 0 otherwise.	Disability	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if individuals identified any of the question saying "no work" or "not work" because of "Disabled", 0 otherwise.
Lack of Safety Net	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant indicated being subject to financial safety net, indicating a lack of financial safety net, 0 if "None of the above".	N/A (Not directly comparable)	N/A (CPS does not directly capture safety net status)
LGBTQIAP	Dummy variable where equals to 1 if applicant identified as LGBTQIAP+, 0 if "No".	LGBTQ	Dummy variable that equals to 1 if choose "same- sex spouse" or "same-sex partner".
Number of Artists	21,921	2,378	10,109

Table A.2. Disciplinary Composition of GIA versus CPS Artists

Disciplines	GIA Applicants	CPS Artists	CPS Artists According to GIA	GIA According to CPS
Craft	6.28		1.67	
Interdisciplinary Arts	6.56		1.67	
Performance Arts	6.93		1.67	
Social Practice	3.49		1.67	
Media Arts	7.95		2.86	
Traditional Arts	2.38		1.67	
Visual Arts	16.54		10.00	
Oral Traditions	1.25		1.67	
Dance	4.00		0.81	
Design	7.06		21.00	
Film	9.67		13.86	
Literary Arts	6.57		18.38	
Music	13.91		10.96	
Theater	7.41		12.12	
Artist and Related Workers		10.8		39.13
Dancers and Choreographers		0.66		4.00
Commercial and Industrial Designers		0.32		1.41
Fashion Designers		0.74		1.41
Floral Designers		2.16		1.41
Graphic		9.88		1.41
Designers Other Designers		11.66		5.68
Producers and		5.50		4.27
Directors Other Media and Communication Equipment Workers		3.49		7.75
Television, Video, and Film Camera Operators and Editors		3.35		2.42
Editors		3.60		2.19
Writers and Authors		9.52		2.19
Technical Writers		1.74		2.19
Broadcast Announcers and Radio Disc		0.96		3.97
Jockeys Music Directors and Composers		1.58		3.48
Musicians and Singers		5.40		3.48
Disc Jockeys, except Radio		0.72		3.48
Actors		1.95		1.85
Photographers		6.74		8.27