

# Research Brief #1: Artists' Demographics

In 2022, Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) launched its Guaranteed Income (GI) for Artists Program. This program provided 2,400 artists across New York State with \$1,000 a month for 18 months. Built on the principle that all artists deserve financial security, the GI program ensured artists could use these no-strings-attached monthly payments in whatever way they chose, including directly supporting their artistic practice, stabilizing their financial situation, building a savings buffer to help with financial emergencies, paying down debts, or anything else.

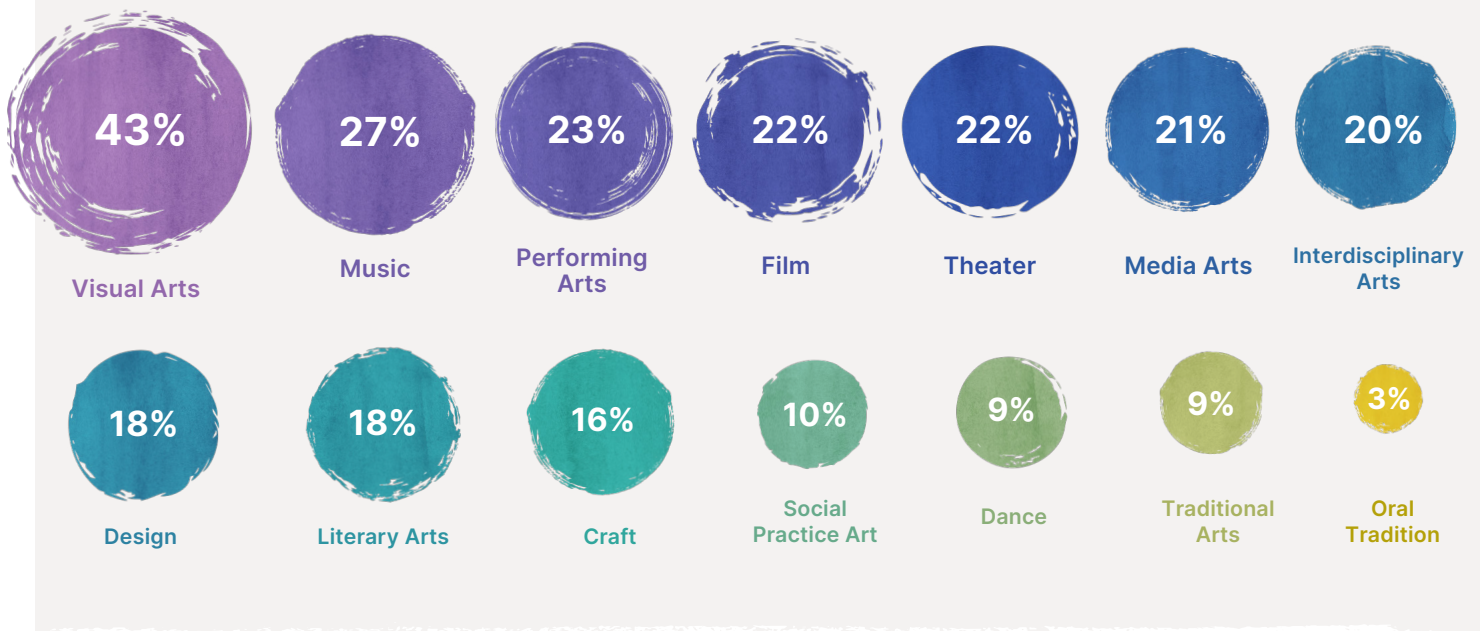
**This research brief explores the characteristics of the artists who participated in this program using information collected through surveys and interviews.<sup>1</sup>** We describe the 2,400 artists who were selected based on the key eligibility criteria for the program, which included being an 'artist, culture bearer, or culture maker'<sup>2</sup> living in New York State, and having financial need as defined by the Self-Sufficiency Standard.<sup>3</sup> In addition, CRNY prioritized the following characteristics to identify artists who experience structural barriers to financial security: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), Deaf/Disabled, LGBTQIAP+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, Pansexual), Immigrants, Caregivers, Criminal legal system-involved, Lack of financial safety net, and Rural.

- 
1. See *Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study: Introduction* for a detailed description of all research methods and data sources. Some of the data in this brief differ from those reported in CRNY's "By The Numbers" released at the start of the program, as they come from a different data source collected from a unique sample of artists at the conclusion of the program. [https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/GI-By-the-Numbers\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/GI-By-the-Numbers_FINAL-1.pdf)
  2. CRNY defined an artist, culture bearer, or culture maker as "someone who regularly engages in artistic practice to: express themselves with the intention of communicating richly to others; pass on traditional knowledge and cultural practices; have social impacts with and within communities; and/or bring cultural resources to their communities." <https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/>
  3. The Self-Sufficiency Standard determines the amount of income required for working families to meet basic needs at a minimally adequate level. This Standard considers family composition, ages of children, and geographic differences in costs. Kucklick, A. & Manzer, L. (2021). *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for New York 2021*. Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington School of Social Work. [https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NY2021\\_SSS.pdf](https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NY2021_SSS.pdf)

We found that the artists who were selected reflected a range of artistic disciplines. Moreover, they came from all over the state and represented a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Despite their financial vulnerabilities, artists in the program were highly credentialed, which points to their critical contributions to economic vitality. They also had families to take care of, illustrating their role in creating the social fabric of New York State.

FIGURE 1.1

Percentage of Artists in the Guaranteed Income Program, by Artistic Discipline



## Key Findings

### Artists in the GI program worked in an array of artistic disciplines.

Many artists reported working in multiple disciplines. As one artist told us, "I've done ... off Broadway, I've done tours, I've been in films and then I picked up along the way other artistic skills that started to show evidence that I had talent in ... I'm [a] multifaceted artist." The data show us that most artists in the program worked in the visual arts (43%). Artists also reported working in other popular art forms including music (27%), performing arts (23%), film (22%), and theater (22%). Less popular were the traditional arts (9%) and social practice art (10%), yet a sizable number of artists in the GI program still worked in these disciplines.

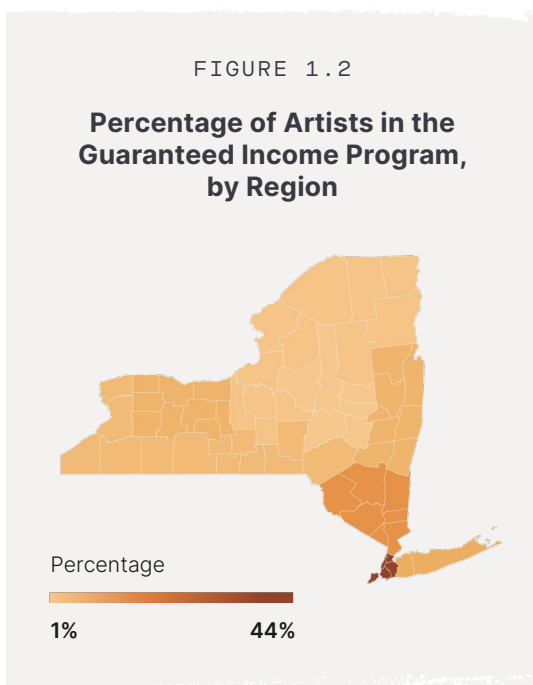
Oral Tradition, at 3%, registered as the lowest among the artistic disciplines. This could reflect changing cultural practices or the challenges in preserving oral traditions in a modern, digital world. On the other hand, newer or hybrid forms like Media Arts (21%) and Interdisciplinary Arts (20%) have garnered notable interest, pointing to a growing appreciation for innovative art forms that blend multiple media or approaches.

This diversity of artistic disciplines among the GI participants underscores how traditional and contemporary arts coexist in New York State, reflecting evolving tastes and technological influences on artistic expression.

### Artists in the GI program came from all over the State of New York.

Not surprisingly, a large proportion of artists in the GI program (65%) reported residing in New York City.<sup>4</sup> Regions around New York City, including Mid-Hudson and Long Island, had relatively high rates, with 10% and 5% of artists in the program reporting living there, respectively. These findings highlight New York City as a primary center for arts and cultural activity in the State of New York with its dense population, diverse communities, and strong cultural infrastructure.

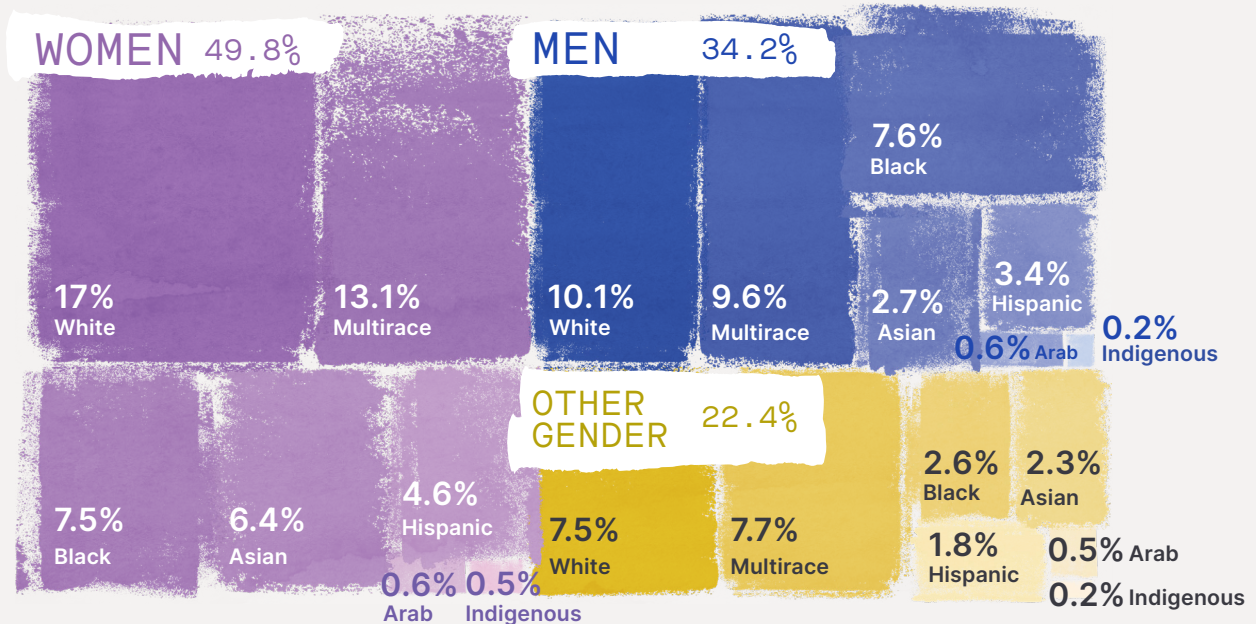
Yet, for some artists, living outside of New York City is important to their craft: *“Living in a small town, I’ve kind of created a lifestyle that’s both connected to art and nature. It’s nice being away from the city noise and distractions, allowing time to really dive into creative projects that are rooted in our community and environment.”* Thirty-five percent of artists in the GI program came from the rest of the state, with 28% residing outside of urban areas. The Capital Region had 4% of artists living there. Regions like Mohawk Valley (0.4%) and North Country (2%) showed the lowest rates of residing artists, but still with a total of around 100 artists who participated in the GI program. These findings illustrate how artists live and work across the state in urban, suburban, and rural communities—not just in New York City.



4. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, New York City composed 43.6% of the population of New York State.

FIGURE 1.3

Percentage of Artists in Guaranteed Income Program, by Race and Gender



**Artists in the GI program came from a range of backgrounds and experiences.**

Often the backgrounds and experiences of artists help fuel their practice. As one artist said, *“When I came back to my heritage, it was more than art—it was reconnecting with my identity in a deeper, more meaningful way.”* The data reflect the diversity of backgrounds and experiences among the GI artists. Over half of artists in the GI program (1,223 artists) identified as LGBTQIAP+, and over 15% (369 artists) reported being Deaf/Disabled, indicating a substantial representation of artists tied to historical and structural disadvantages were supported through the GI program. Program participants reflected a substantial diversity in terms of race with over 17% identifying as Black, approximately 10% as Hispanic, and over 25% as multirace. Gender diversity was also notable, with women artists representing 50% of artists in the program, 34% identifying as men, and individuals identifying as another gender constituting 22% (528 artists), highlighting the state’s broad spectrum of gender identities.<sup>5</sup>

5. Respondents were able to select more than one gender identity.



See me by Daniel Gov\*

In addition to the racial and gender diversity among the artists in the GI program, the data revealed that there was also a rich linguistic diversity, with English as the primary language for 90% of artists, yet other languages like Spanish (3%) and Mandarin or Cantonese (1%) adding to a multicultural tapestry of artists in New York State. Furthermore, 20% (480 artists) in the program identified as immigrants. These findings suggest that the artists of New York State help showcase the cultural richness of New York State residents, and promote the state as a cultural and social beacon that can celebrate its diversity.

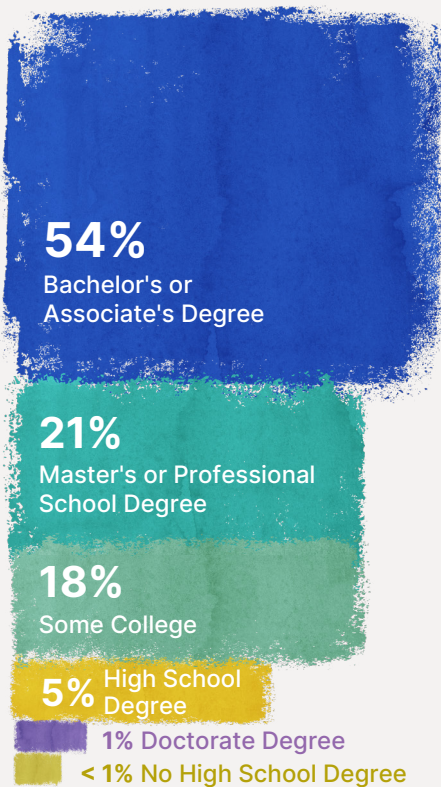
### Artists in the GI program were overall very well educated despite living with financial insecurity.

Many of the artists in the GI program valued their educational profiles, particularly for *“the structure it gives ... and the ways it opens doors for more opportunities in art and beyond.”* This is apparent given that artists in the GI program were highly educated, despite their financial challenges (see *Brief #3 Financial Well-being* for more on participants’ financial circumstances). More than half (54%) of artists held a Bachelor’s or Associate’s degree, and 21% had achieved a Master’s or Professional School degree. Their financial instability demonstrates that educational attainment does not always lead to economic security. This disconnect challenges assumptions about the relationship between education and financial stability, highlighting the unique vulnerabilities artists face even with advanced qualifications.

In interviews with artists, we learned that GI helped some artists further their education and that doing so was *“helping”* some artists *“get work.”* Both the high level of educational attainment of GI artists and their pursuit of furthering their training underscores a skilled and knowledgeable population that can drive innovation and economic growth within the state. Further, the high rate of advanced degrees among artists in the GI program emphasizes the professional expertise among this population and their influence on New York State, making it a location for industries seeking a highly educated and productive workforce.

FIGURE 1.4

#### Percentage of Artists in the Guaranteed income Program, by Educational Level



*"I want to make sure the work I do is something I can feel proud of, especially as my children look up to me."*

## Artists in the GI program were caregivers, too.

In interviews with artists, many spoke about how important working as an artist was for their families, not only for themselves. One artist reported, *"I want to make sure the work I do is something I can feel proud of, especially as my children look up to me."* Close to one third of artists in the GI program reported providing care to children, the elderly, or other family members, reflecting their essential role in the social fabric of New York. These artists were not only creating cultural value but also serving as caregivers and anchors of stability for their loved ones, underscoring how others relied on their well-being and resilience for their own.

The GI payments influenced the time artists could spend on caregiving. Three quarters of GI artists reported that the funding allowed them to spend more time with loved ones. Nearly 10% of artists ranked spending time with or supporting family and friends as one of the top three ways they utilized their GI payments. Moreover, around 50% of artists reported that caregiving responsibilities were a major barrier preventing them from spending enough time on their artistic practice. The data showed that the GI program helped remove these barriers, as participants reported significantly lower rates of "insufficient time" compared to non-participants (see **Brief #5 Juggling Responsibilities** for more on how payments impacted artists' time). Therefore, the GI program not only supported artists' creative work but also helped them balance their roles as caregivers, contributing to both their families and their art.

### AUTHORS

Douglas Noonan and  
Joanna Woronkovicz  
Center for Cultural Affairs,  
Indiana University

\***Creative Expression**  
**submissions** courtesy of  
Appalachian State University  
Family Economic Policy Lab