

Creative Industries: Business & Employment in the Arts

Key Points

A research-based approach . . . The Creative Industries study provides a research-based approach to understanding the size and scope of the arts in relation to the nation’s economy. This study is a unique representation of both the nonprofit and for-profit businesses involved in the creation or distribution of the arts. It is composed of arts-centric businesses that range from nonprofit museums, symphonies, and theaters to for-profit film, architecture, and design companies. We use data from Dun & Bradstreet—the most comprehensive and trusted source for business information in the U.S.—to provide specific and reliable insights about employment and the number of arts-centric businesses in both the nonprofit and for-profit arts.

Formidable industry . . . Nationally, 673,656 businesses are involved in the creation or distribution of the arts, and they employ 3.48 million people. This represents 4.01 percent of all U.S. businesses and 2.01 percent of all U.S. employees.

Mapping the broad reach of the arts . . . Mapping of the creative industries across both geographic and political jurisdictions demonstrates that these businesses are broadly distributed and thriving throughout our communities and not, as is sometimes believed, strictly in downtown areas.

Arts education . . . With 3.48 million people working for arts businesses, arts education is a critical tool in fueling the creative industries with arts-trained workers as well as new arts consumers. Alan Greenspan, former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman, notes, “The arts develop skills and habits of mind that are important for workers in the new economy of ideas.”

Policy development and evaluation . . . Because the Creative Industries research is conducted regularly, it is a tool for policy makers, funders, and elected leaders to track the efficacy of arts policies and creative economy initiatives. Cities and states seeking a competitive advantage use these data to measure themselves.

Economic development . . . The creative industries play a major role in building and sustaining economically vibrant communities. Arts organizations provide jobs and generate government revenue and are the cornerstone of tourism and downtown revitalization.

Export industry . . . The United States has exported more arts and cultural goods and services than it imported since 2006, including during the Great Recession. In 2013, the arts netted a \$24.1-billion-dollar trade surplus.

A conservative research approach . . . We take a conservative approach to defining the creative industries by focusing solely on businesses involved in the production or distribution of the arts. Not included, for example, are computer programming and scientific research—both creative, but not focused on the arts. Our analyses demonstrate an under-representation of nonprofit arts organizations in the Dun & Bradstreet database, and consequently, in our data. Additionally, many individual artists are not included, as not all are employed by a business.