

# UNDERSTANDING THE SAN DIEGO REGION



## A PORTRAIT OF SAN DIEGO ARTISTS: A Research Report and Summary of Findings - 2011



The San Diego Foundation

*We must understand. Then we can act.*

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Greetings:

The San Diego Foundation is pleased to share *A Portrait of San Diego Artists: A Research Report and Summary of Findings - 2011*, which provides what we believe is the first-ever compilation of data on the status of artists living and working in the San Diego region.

The release of this study was part of a year-long discovery and planning process which resulted in the launch of *Innovation through the Arts*, a new and multi-faceted, community impact initiative. Over the coming years, the initiative will demonstrate that innovation and creativity contribute to community and economic vitality when ongoing investment and engagement in the arts occur. Findings from the study will inform the development of new programs that benefit artists and potentially increase opportunities for jobs and greater civic engagement.

The information compiled is a first-step toward building a greater awareness of the value of artists as contributing members of San Diego's workforce which we hope will increase overall patronage of the arts and understanding of the creative process. We look forward to the discussion the report will generate among those who support the arts and who desire to invest in the future of our region.

Sincere thanks to the James Irvine Foundation, whose support through the *Communities Advancing the Arts Initiative*, made this research project and the *Innovation through the Arts* initiative possible.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Kelly".

**Bob Kelly**

*President & CEO,  
The San Diego Foundation*



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicia W. Shaw".

**Felicia W. Shaw**

*Director, Arts & Culture Program  
The San Diego Foundation*



#### **Mission**

The mission of The San Diego Foundation is to improve the quality of life in all of our communities by providing leadership for effective philanthropy that builds enduring assets and by promoting community solutions through research, convenings, and actions that advance the common good.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to provide The San Diego Foundation and the community with a first-ever portrait of artists living and working in San Diego County. Goals were to identify the characteristics and needs of San Diego's individual artists, and contextualize this information with comparisons to other communities.

## Key Findings

San Diego County has, by any measure, a significantly large population of artists. With approximately 10,000 artists, San Diego is the 11th largest community of artists in the nation. Moreover, the economic and social impacts of an artist population in a region are now understood to be substantial and under-recognized. There are indications that San Diego's artists are a similar contributor to our region. A study of these impacts could identify policy opportunities to leverage their contributions.

## Theme: Artists are Self Reliant

San Diego artists are often highly educated, pursue continuing education, and integrate into the economy in multiple ways. Artists tend to be entrepreneurs who work in diverse settings and frequently volunteer. While they are not high earners, on the average, and earn little from their art work, they support their art-making through earnings, with little grant support. San Diego artists often work more than one job, but focus on arts-related work. They have better means for creating their work than for presenting or exhibiting it, and they most-often self-promote their work through informal means.

## Where San Diego Artists Live

Artists tend to be long-term residents, often planning to stay in San Diego. While artists live and work throughout many areas of the county, there are small concentrations of artists in neighborhoods associated with San Diego's arts, such as downtown San Diego, North and South Park, Hillcrest, Encinitas, Mission Hills, and University Heights. Demographic information on San Diego artists is incomplete but respondents were less diverse, older and more female than the general population.

Overall, this initial portrait of San Diego's artists is one of a large group with a strong capacity for navigating a complex cultural and economic system, benefitting from and making use of formal education and ongoing training. This population nonetheless has needs that include professional development and assistance in better connecting its work to the community and the economy. There appears to be a strong opportunity for leveraging San Diego's artists as an under-utilized asset in economic and community development.

# INTRODUCTION

The Foundation has a long-standing commitment to arts support in San Diego County, focused until now primarily on nonprofit arts organizations and scholarships. Recognizing the importance of individual artists to the economy and cultural ecology of the region, and the comparative lack of support resources available to artists, The Foundation decided to investigate artists' needs and potential ways to support their vitality.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to provide a first-ever portrait of artists living and working in San Diego County. Goals were to identify the characteristics and needs of San Diego's individual artists, and contextualize this information with comparisons to other communities. Research objectives were to better understand artists' demographics, artistic focus, employment, income, training, work resources, marketing, and other issues.



## Study Methodology

This portrait of San Diego County's artists was developed primarily through analysis of an online survey and a review of relevant literature.

The mailing survey\* was distributed through a range of arts and other organizations whose lists include artists. The survey included a "forward-to-a-friend" option to encourage viral distribution. It was available from February 8 to March 1, 2011, and resulted in 690 completed responses. Based on the population of artists in San Diego County, this provides a 95% statistical confidence level.

The literature review included studies of artists and artists' communities in several cities across the country. This information provides valuable contextual information and limited comparisons of San Diego with other metropolitan areas.

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*\*Online surveys are now often regarded as preferable to mailed and telephone surveys, since they allow for more flexible questionnaire design, are easier to complete and submit, and cost much less. There are legitimate concerns about a digital divide inhibiting older, lower income or non-technological people from responding. It is often possible to address such concerns through targeted distribution.*



## Our Definition of “Artist”

This study was based on an inclusive definition of the term “artist,” one that is widely shared in the research on individual artists and is based on the U.S. government’s employment classifications. The survey allowed respondents to self-select as working artists, without imposing terms such as “professional” and “full-time.” It includes creative professionals in a variety of disciplines and fields:

- Actor/director (including stage and film)
- Dancer/choreographer
- Media artist (including filmmaker, photographer, video-maker, animator, new media, and digital media)
- Multimedia or performance artist
- Musician (including composer, instrumentalist, singer, conductor, and DJ/mixing)
- Literary artist (including fiction and non-fiction writer, playwright, screenwriter, and poet)
- Designer (including lighting, scenography, costume, fashion, graphic, commercial, industrial, game, interior, and floral)

# STUDY FINDINGS

## Overall Profile of San Diego Artists

### San Diego's artist population is large.

San Diego County has, by any measure, a relatively large and significant population of artists. With approximately 10,000 artists, San Diego's artist population is the 11<sup>th</sup>-largest community of artists in the nation. This count is about equal with Orange County, larger than Miami and Portland, and smaller than Los Angeles and the Bay Area.

### SIZE OF SAN DIEGO'S ARTIST COMMUNITY

Metro Area	Number of Artists
1. Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA	79,781
2. New York-Northeastern NJ	77,216
3. Chicago, IL	26,901
4. San Francisco-Oakland, CA	25,262
5. Washington, DC/MD/VA	22,925
6. Boston, MA	16,884
7. Atlanta, GA	14,808
8. Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	12,155
9. Seattle, WA	11,030
10. Orange County, CA	10,656
11. San Diego, CA	10,330
12. Miami, FL	7,033
13. Portland, OR	6,630
14. Cleveland, OH	5,667
United States	881,841

*Source: Markusen and Schrock, 2006: Table 3. Artists defined as musicians, writers, performing and visual artists. Does not include designers, architects and other creative professionals. Based on 2000 data from the U.S. Census (2010 data is not yet available), this is the most reliable current comparative information.*

San Diego's concentration of artists is also substantial. The artist population of any region is always a tiny portion in absolute numbers. For example, Los Angeles County has the largest artist population in the nation—approximately 80,000—yet this represents only 0.81% of the total population of nearly 10 million people. By contrast, San Diego County has about 10,000 artists within a total population of 3 million people, or 0.33%. Most significantly, these 10,000 working artists represent 0.63% of San Diego's total labor force.



San Diego Symphony

## The impact of an artist population is more than just numbers.

The role of an artist population far exceeds its numbers. The economic impact of an artist population in a region is now understood to be greater than previously thought. As renowned economist Ann Markusen demonstrated in her 2003 study, “The Artist Dividend”:

Artistic activity is often viewed as a discretionary element in a regional economy, rather like icing on a cake of industry, finance and basic services. ...on the contrary, artistic activity is a major and varied contributor to economic vitality. We suggest that the productivity of and earnings in a regional economy rise as the incidence of artists within its boundaries increases, because artists’ creativity and specialized skills enhance the design, production and marketing of products and services in other sectors.\*

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*“The Artistic Dividend: The Arts’ Hidden Contributions to Regional Development.” 2003. Ann Markusen and David A. King. Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota.*



In addition, artists contribute to a society in non-economic ways that appear to far outstrip their financial role. Artists often work in more than one setting, crossing over the commercial, nonprofit and community sectors. Artists' commercial work takes, on average, the smallest amount of their time but is the best paid. Their nonprofit and community activities occupy more of their time, providing a great variety of benefits to the region in which artists live. This pattern is familiar to many: the artist's "straight job" or lucrative commercial gig is only a portion of a varied work life that may include teaching kids in a community center, administering a nonprofit arts program, or being adjunct faculty at a community college.\* In fact, the economic and social impacts are blended, as described by Markusen in a 2010 study, "Los Angeles: America's Artist Super City."

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\* "Crossover: How Artists Build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work." 2006. Ann Markusen, Sam Gilmore, Amanda Johnson, Titus Levi, and Andrea Martinez. Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota.



*Lamb's Players Theatre Courtesy of Ken Jacques*

Artists contribute to the Los Angeles creative economy in multiple ways. Those who work full- or part-time or on contract for the cultural industries help to make its products competitive. Many work for profitable companies in professional, scientific and technical services, management consulting, publishing, computer systems and design, and restaurants, music venues and bars. Yet others work in food processing, machinery and equipment, and producer services where their talents make companies more productive and competitive. Some have created storefront spaces where aspiring artists can learn artistic skills, access equipment, exhibit, and perform. Others work for nonprofit religious, civic, social, advocacy, and grantmaking organizations or for public sector cultural affairs, recreation, and educational enterprises (Markusen, Gilmore et al, 2006). Furthermore, local venues and the artists that animate them are increasingly understood to be magnets for and retainers of skilled workers drawn to quality-of-life locales. (Florida, 2002; Clark, 2004).\*

It was beyond the scope of this study to quantify and map the economic and social impacts of San Diego's artist population. Assuming San Diego is like virtually all other cities and regions that have been studied to date, such research would likely demonstrate not only the extent of these impacts but also identify policy opportunities to leverage their role.



All survey respondents are working artists living in San Diego County (students were screened from the survey but invited to join The Foundation's artist list).

- The great majority of respondents are age **25 to 64**, with more than half (**53%**) in the **45 to 64** age category.
- Respondents are also predominately female (**59%**), although it is often observed that women are more likely to respond to surveys than men. (A similar survey of artists in San José, California had a (**62%**) female response rate)
- Respondents are predominately White, closely matching San Diego's general population. (**77%** compared with **71%** in the general population)
- They are also less diverse than the general San Diego County population, having a smaller portion of populations of color, especially Hispanic/Latino (**7%**) versus **30%**) and Asian/Pacific Islander (**3%** versus **10%**). However, this is more diverse than the U.S. Census national data on artists' race and ethnicity: (**83%**) White/Non-Hispanic, (**6%**) Hispanic, (**5%**) Black/African-American, (**3%**) Asian, and (**3%**) Other/Multi-racial. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of San Diego's artists is their level of education. They are more than twice as likely to have a college degree or higher. (**77%** versus **34%**) for the general population). One-third (**34%**) have a masters or a doctorate degree. This level of education supports the idea that artists are a powerful contributor to the economy and to society, in terms of knowledge, expertise and leadership.



## Demographic information for San Diego artists has limitations.

It is important to note that only limited demographic information is available on San Diego artists. The 2000 U.S. Census estimate of the total artist population is useful for city-to-city comparisons, but may not represent the full extent of artists in the community. The Census only asks for primary occupation and, since many artists work in two or more jobs, the extent of artistic work is likely to be underestimated. Without knowing the size and demographics of San Diego's artist community and without conducting fully representative sampling research, interpretation and comparisons are limited. This means that this study has generated an accurate picture of survey respondents, who appear to constitute a representative number of all San Diego artists, but we do not have a picture of the complete diversity of all San Diego artists in terms of demographics, location, artistic discipline, etc. Nonetheless, this study presents an initial, valuable portrait of San Diego artists who self-identify as members of an artist community.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAN DIEGO ARTISTS *(Survey Respondents)*

Characteristic	San Diego Artists	All San Diegans <i>(2000-09 U.S. Census)</i>	All U.S. Artist <i>(2000 U.S. Census)</i>
<b>Age</b>			
18 – 24	1.55%	*23.2%	
25 – 34	16.25%		
35 – 44	15.33%	14.3%	
<b>45 – 54</b>	<b>22.60%</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	
<b>55 – 64</b>	<b>30.50%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	
<b>Race/Ethnicity (Ranked by %)</b>			
<b>White</b>	<b>77.18%</b>	<b>71.1%</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Latino/Hispanic/Chicano</b>	<b>6.81%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Multi-racial	5.23%	3.8%	**
Asian/Asian-American/Pacific Islander	3.49%	10.2%	3%
Other	3.33%	8.7%	**
African-American/African Descent	3.01%	5.1%	5%
Native American/Native Alaskan	0.95%	1.2%	**
<b>Gender</b>			
<b>Female</b>	<b>58.75%</b>		
Male	41.25%		
<b>Education</b>			
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>34%</b>	
Bachelor's degree/equivalent	42.12%		
Masters degree	29.80%		
Some college	12.64%		
2-year college/technical/ associate's degree	6.55%		
Doctoral degree	5.46%		
High school or GED	3.21%		

\*This figure is for ages 20 – 34.

\*\*The national figure is 3% for Other, including Multi-racial.

# Where Artists Live and Work

There are small concentrations of artists in areas often associated with San Diego's arts.

Artists are generally dispersed through San Diego County in terms of where they live and where they work. Artists' residences and workplaces are found in less than half (44%) of San Diego County zip codes. There are a few neighborhoods with small concentrations of artists, including areas often associated with the arts and creativity.

## WHERE SAN DIEGO ARTISTS LIVE

Neighborhoods	Percent of All S.D. Artists	Zip Code
North/South Park/ University Heights	6.75%	92104
Encinitas/Leucadia	6.60%	92024
Mission Hills/Hillcrest	6.13%	92103
Normal Heights/Kensington/ University Heights	4.60%	92116

## WHERE SAN DIEGO ARTISTS WORK

Neighborhoods	Percent of All S.D. Artists	Zip Code
Downtown San Diego	9.28%	92101
Encinitas/Leucadia	6.51%	92024
North/South Park/University Heights	6.35%	92104
Mission Hills/Hillcrest	5.21%	92103

Artists tend to be long-term residents, often planning to stay in San Diego.

Respondents are generally long-term residents (59% have lived in San Diego 20 or more years), home-owners (60%) and consider their housing affordable (61%). More than three-quarters plan to stay for at least the next five years (76%).

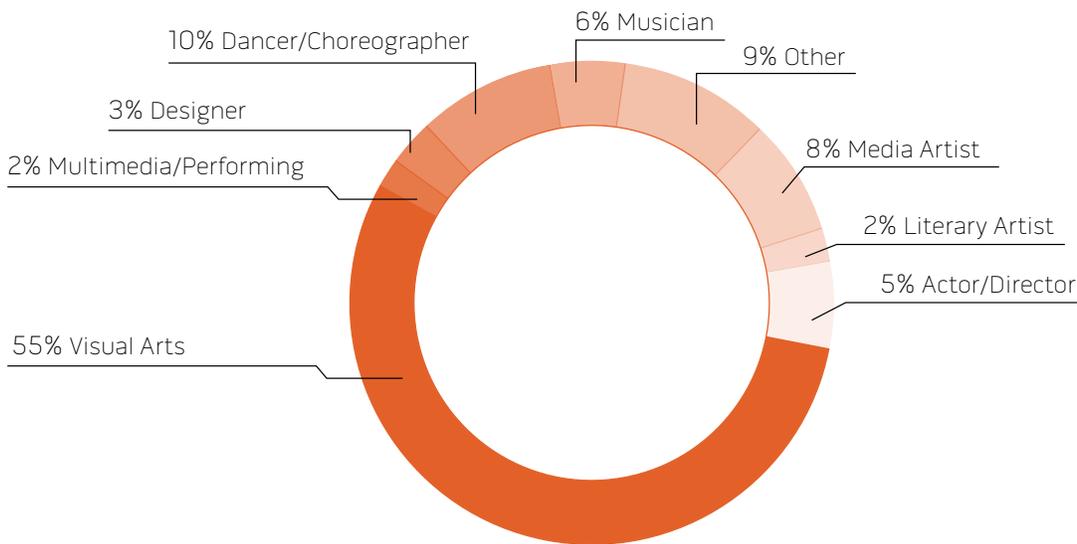
This mirrors the findings of a similar study of artists in San José, where (54%) are home-owners and (53%) consider their housing affordable.

# Artists' Work

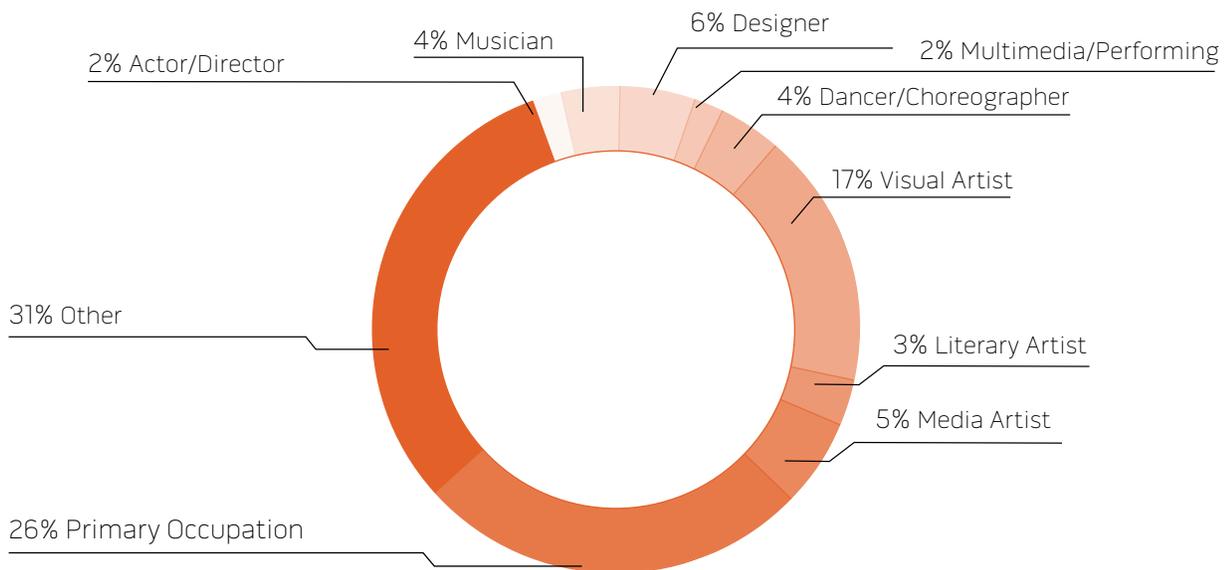
San Diego artists often work more than one job but focus on arts-related work.

By far, most respondents work primarily as visual artists (55%), with a diversity of other disciplines represented. In addition, about three-quarters identified having a second occupation (74%), with about one-third working outside the arts (32%).

## ARTIST'S PRIMARY WORK



## ARTIST'S SECONDARY WORK





The national figure for visual artists is (45%) (2000 U.S. Census) but it is difficult to interpret the higher figure for San Diego because of the limits of this data, noted on page 13). In comparison with these national figures, other disciplines are underrepresented in this survey (musicians, other performing artists, designers, and literary artists). This may reflect the context of the survey, coming from an arts funder and through a nonprofit network. Most musicians and designers, for example, have a more commercial orientation and often do not describe themselves first as “artists.”

### Artists are entrepreneurs who work in multiple settings and volunteer often.

Respondents are highly entrepreneurial. More than half work as freelancers (53%) and one-third own their own companies (35%).

Reflecting the “crossover” phenomenon described (page 13), in which artists often pursue their work in several sectors, the great majority of respondents teach or work in an arts-related field, such as arts administrator or arts consultant, in addition to their art work (65%). Only about one-third have a non-arts job (32%).

Artists are also frequent volunteers: (80%) volunteer their time to a nonprofit group or charitable cause.

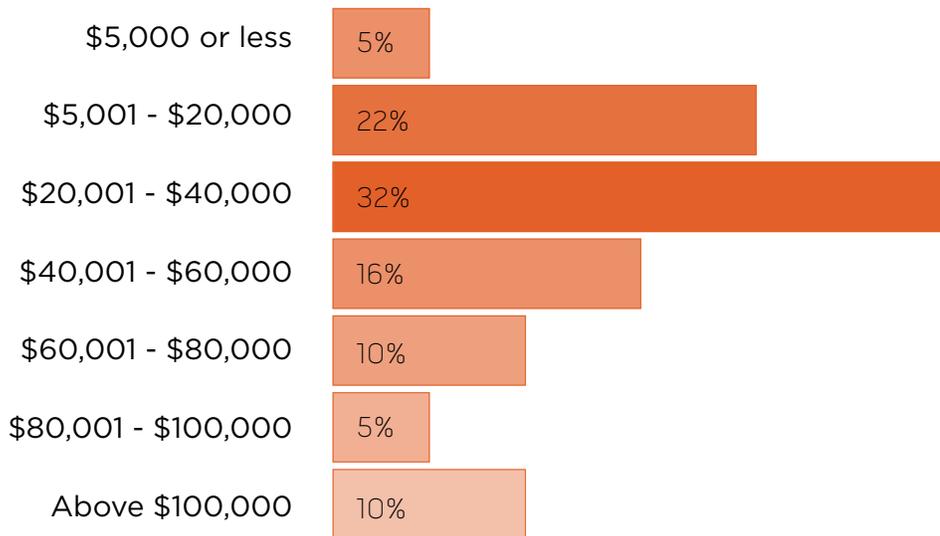
About one-fifth of all respondents state that their artwork is associated with a specific ethnic or cultural tradition or community (22%).

# Artists' Income

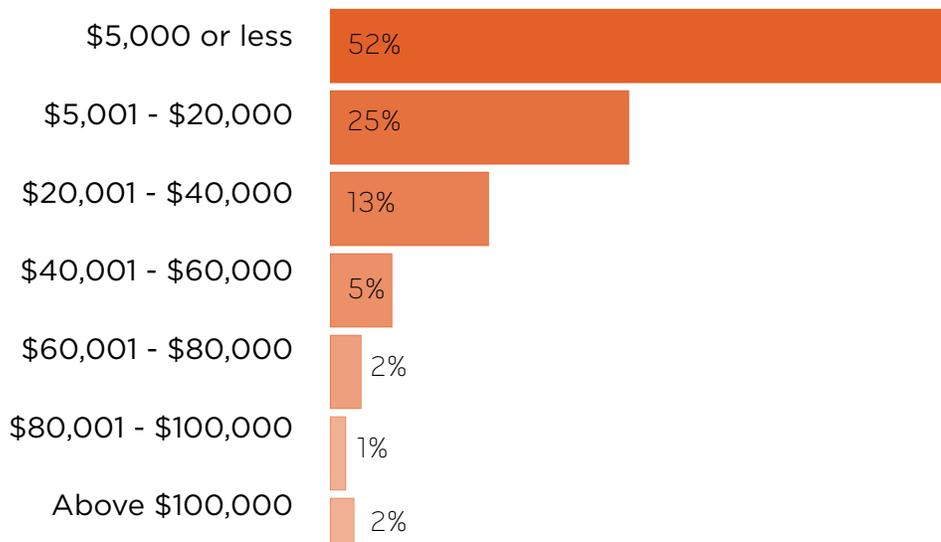
Artists make less than most San Diegans and little from their artwork.

San Diego artists are not high earners, on the average. Most (54%) have total incomes between \$5,000 and \$40,000, while the median income for San Diegans over the age of 25 is \$39,005 (U.S. Census 2005-09). Respondents' income from their art-related work is very low, with 52% earning less than \$5,000 per year.

## SAN DIEGO ARTISTS' TOTAL EARNINGS



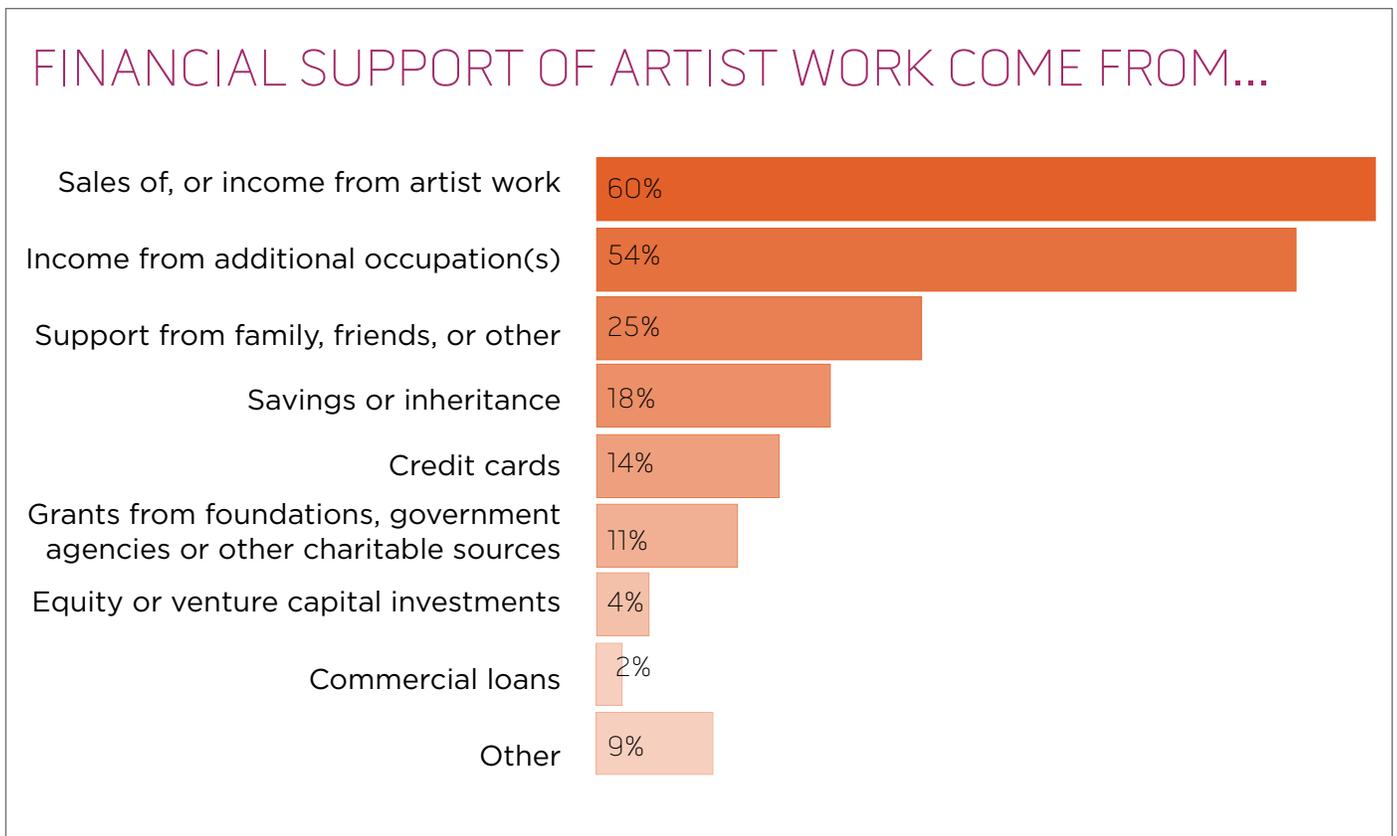
## SAN DIEGO ARTISTS' TOTAL EARNINGS FROM ARTISTIC WORK ONLY



## Support for art-making is mostly earned but often does not cover expenses.

San Diego artists support their artistic work from diverse sources. More than half earn income from their artistic work and/or other employment. Only a few (11%) artists receive some form of grant support.

Artists generally do not make enough income from their art work to cover out-of-pocket creative costs (45%) or living expenses (74%). This compares with the San Jose study, in which (63%) of all respondents were not covering their art-making expenses.



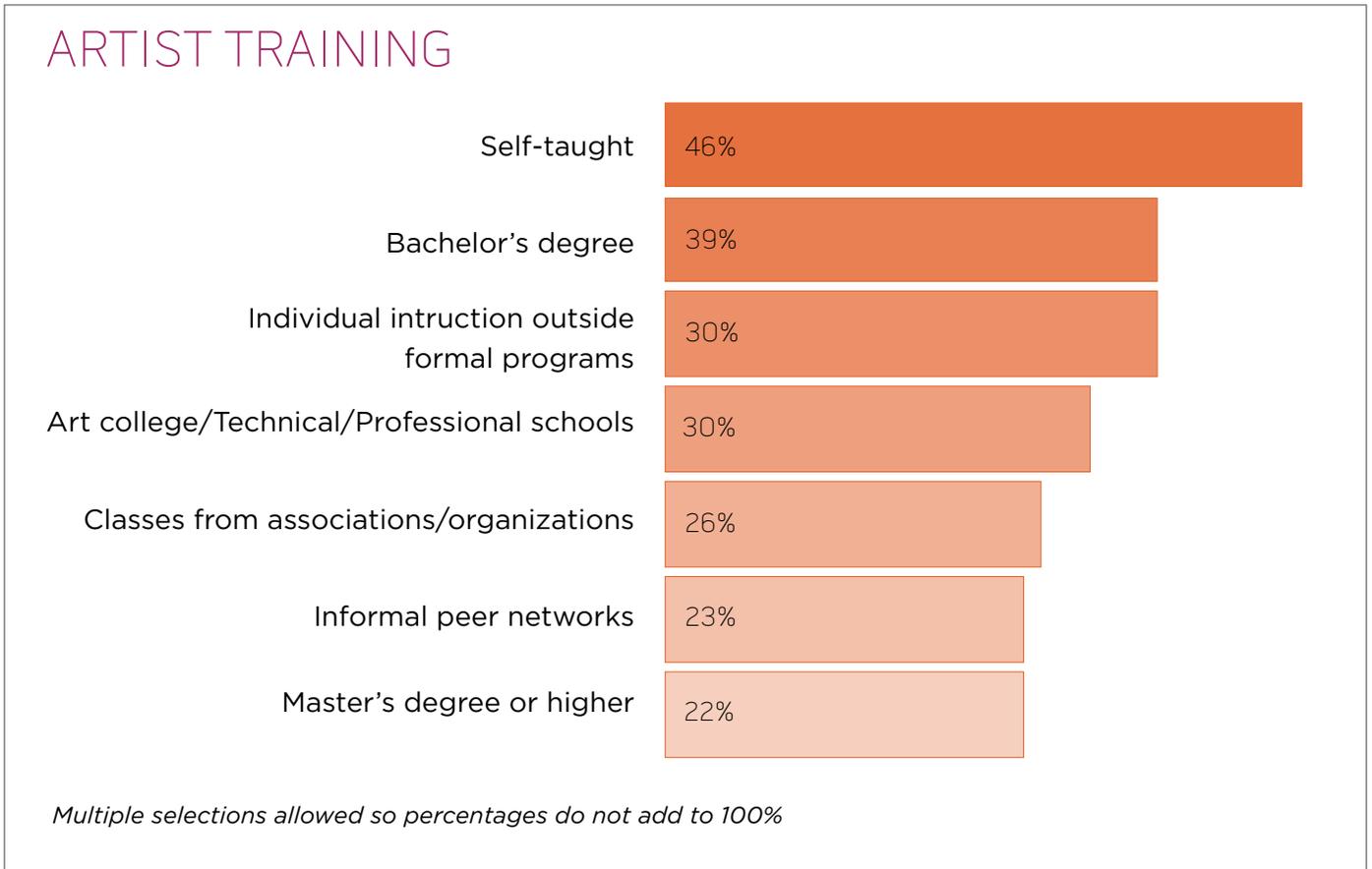
More than three-quarters of artists (78%) have health insurance, which is about equal with the average rate of coverage for California (75%) of Californians under age 65 have health insurance.\*

\*UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, March 2010.

# Artists' Training

Artists are trained in many ways and actively pursue continuing education.

Artists' training comes from a variety of sources, with being self-taught and earning a bachelor's degree as the most frequent responses.



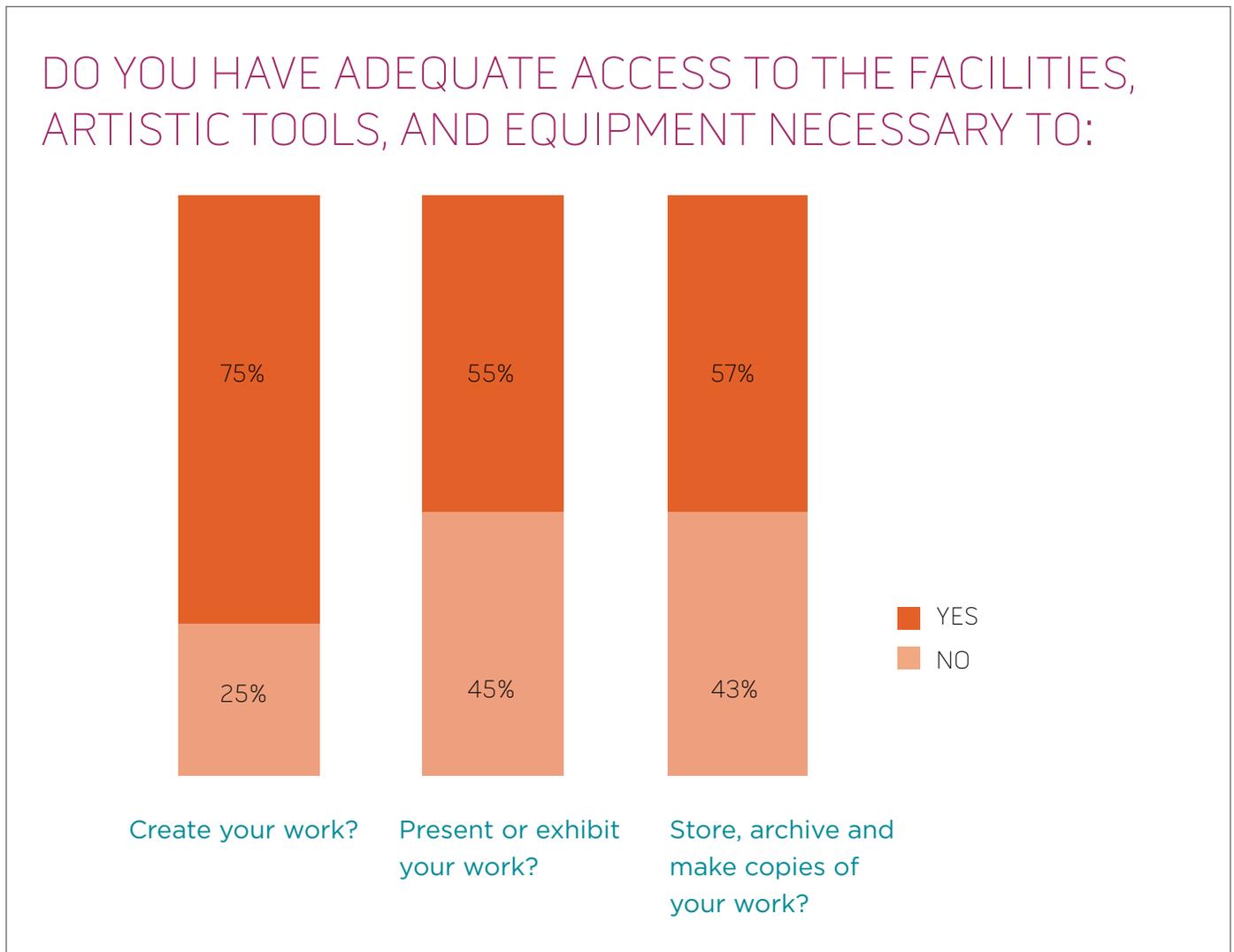
More than three-quarters (**79%**) have recently participated in professional development or plan to do so in the near future. About half do ongoing training in their art form. This strongly suggests an orientation towards continuing education in relation to their artistic careers, and correlates to artists' high educational level.

The cost of training is the primary barrier to training for more than half (**56%**) of the respondents. Other barriers are relatively minor but include lack of information, scheduling and lack of time (about **25%** for each). Distance is not a barrier to continuing education, with almost two-thirds (**67%**) willing to travel 20 or more miles for training to enhance their artistic careers.

# Resources for Artists' Work

Artists generally have more resources to create work than to present or exhibit it.

More than half of respondents have adequate access to facilities, tools and equipment they need to create (75%), present/exhibit (55%) and store/archive/copy (57%) their work.

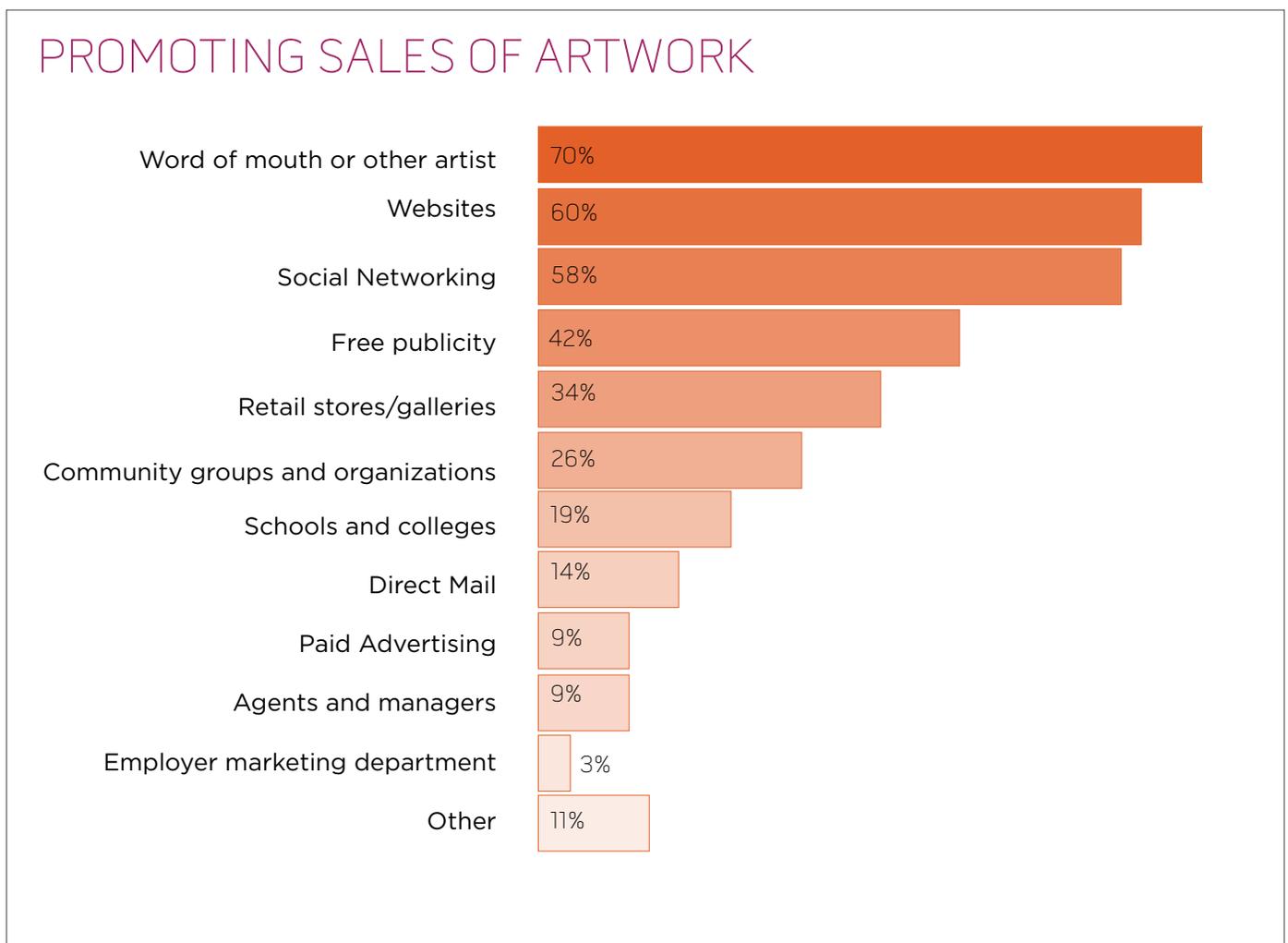


This suggests self-reliance on the part of San Diego's artists, especially with respect to the creative process. Clearly, there are needs for improving support for presenting, exhibiting, and storing artists' work.

# Marketing Artists' Work

## Artists most often self-promote their work through informal means.

Artists promote their work through a diverse range of methods, with an emphasis on word-of-mouth/other artists (70%), websites (60%) and social networking (58%). Retail stores and galleries are used by about one-third (34%) of respondents and agents/managers, only (9%). This reinforces the theme of artists' self-reliance in furthering their careers, and suggests strong connections within and outside of the arts community that support such activities as word-of-mouth and social networking.



# CONCLUSION

## What We Learned

This report on the status of San Diego's professional artists presents a first-look at a community clearly in need of further development and study. We now know that a comparatively large population of artists live and work here, gravitating toward neighborhoods that offer opportunities for employment and fellowship with other artists. More ethnically diverse than the national average, our artists - at least those that responded to the survey - are also older and predominantly female.

San Diego artists like it here. Deeply rooted in our community, they own their own homes, have lived here for many years and plan to stay. Like more and more people faced with today's unsettled economy, they work multiple jobs but manage to focus their secondary work within the arts field.

They exercise their independence by working for themselves as freelancers and contractors. Our artists are highly educated, with many having advanced degrees.

This is just a snapshot of what we know, but there is so much more to learn to bring this picture into focus. The limitations of the study raised questions about the depth and breadth of San Diego's artist community - their needs and attributes - which must be answered if we are to grow this important work force.

### ABOUT THE SAN DIEGO FOUNDATION



The San Diego  
Foundation  
A foundation for your passion

Founded in 1975, The San Diego Foundation's purpose is to promote and increase effective and responsible charitable giving. The Foundation manages more than \$500 million in assets, almost half of which reside in permanent endowment funds that extend the impact of today's gifts to future generations. Since its inception, The Foundation has granted more than \$750 million to San Diego's nonprofit community.

## Looking Ahead

The San Diego Foundation is already taking steps to address one of the most pressing and evident issues uncovered by the research - the need to increase income opportunities for artists. In July 2011, we launched The Foundation's first funding program for individual artists, the *Creative Catalyst Fund: Individual Artist Fellowship program*, which was developed to advance the careers of San Diego professional artists through grants and community outreach activities.

The professional development needs of artists are also high on our list of priorities. Planning has begun on the creation of a curriculum that will provide artists with the training they need to become more effective as business people. To ensure that artists can access space for exhibitions, performances, rehearsals, and other art-making activities, we plan to build a website and searchable database that will help make those connections. We will also continue our efforts to ensure that local artists are prepared for disasters through support of *ArtsReady San Diego*. This program offers workshops and free tools and software to track, archive and protect their creative capital from loss.

And finally, we plan to commission additional research that will delve deeper into the artist community so that we can better understand its strengths and areas of need. *Our Greater San Diego Vision*, a visioning initiative currently underway under the auspices of The Foundation, will provide new opportunities to gauge the importance of this sector in relation to all of our community and cultural amenities, and plan for the future.

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