

## The U.S. Arts Economy in 2019: A National Summary Report

Arts and cultural industries remain among the hardest hit by economic crises stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. A [recent analysis](#) by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Argonne National Laboratory, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, states: “Across the spectrum of artistic and creative endeavors, restrictions on gatherings, changes in consumer behavior (voluntary or otherwise), and severe unemployment have taken a devastating toll on the sector.” Citing federal data, the authors add: “Nowhere has the effect been more direct, deep, and immediate than on the performing arts.”

Prior to the pandemic, however, economic activity in the sector had been expanding. Historically, the growth in “value added” to gross domestic product (GDP) from arts and cultural industries has exceeded the growth rate for the U.S. economy as a whole. The most recent numbers from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), while they do not capture 2020—the year the pandemic took hold—continue this upward trend.

Below are summary findings on the arts economy. Click on the topic to go directly to that section of the document.

- [Total Value of the Arts Economy](#)
- [Trends in Arts and Cultural Production](#)
- [Workers Engaged in Arts and Cultural Production](#)
- [Consumer Spending on Admissions to Performing Arts Events](#)
- [Arts and Cultural Contributions to the Creative Economy](#)
- [Exports of Arts and Cultural Goods and Services](#)
- [Contributions to the U.S. Economy by Non-employers and Small Businesses](#)

## Findings in Brief

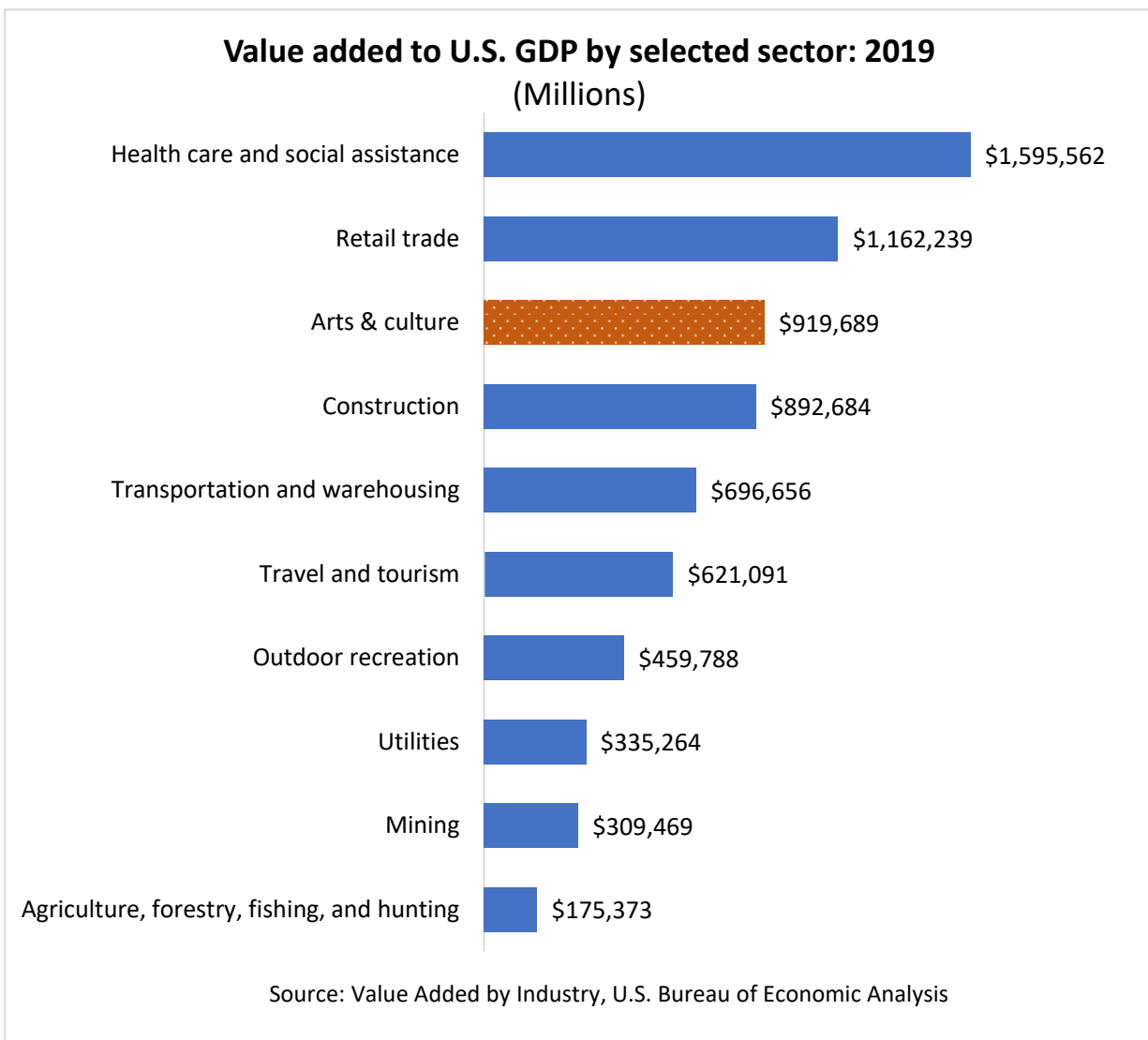
- 1 In 2019, production of arts and cultural goods and services in the U.S. added **4.3 percent** directly to the nation's GDP, for a total approaching a trillion dollars (**\$919.7 billion**).
  - This amount remains greater than the value added by such industries as construction, transportation and warehousing, mining, and agriculture.
- 2 Over a three-year period (2017-2019), the value added to GDP from **arts and cultural production has grown at a 3 percent clip**—slightly higher than the growth rate for the U.S. economy as a whole.
  - Leading growth industries include: web publishing and web streaming services (+11.8 percent), fine arts education (+9.8 percent), and landscape architectural services (+ 7.8 percent).
- 3 In 2019, arts and cultural industries had **5.2 million workers** on payroll, drawing total compensation of more than **\$446 billion**.
  - Non-employer businesses (i.e., independent contractors and sole proprietors) and small businesses accounted for more than \$100 billion in value added by the following arts industries: specialized design services; film and video; architectural services; and performing arts companies and performing arts presenters.
- 4 The arts continue to generate a **widening trade surplus**. From 2006 to 2019, this surplus had grown 10-fold, to more than **\$33 billion**.

*The U.S. Arts Economy in 2019: A National Summary Report* was produced by the National Endowment for the Arts in March 2021 using data from the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), produced in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. More information is available at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

## I. Total Value of the U.S. Arts Economy

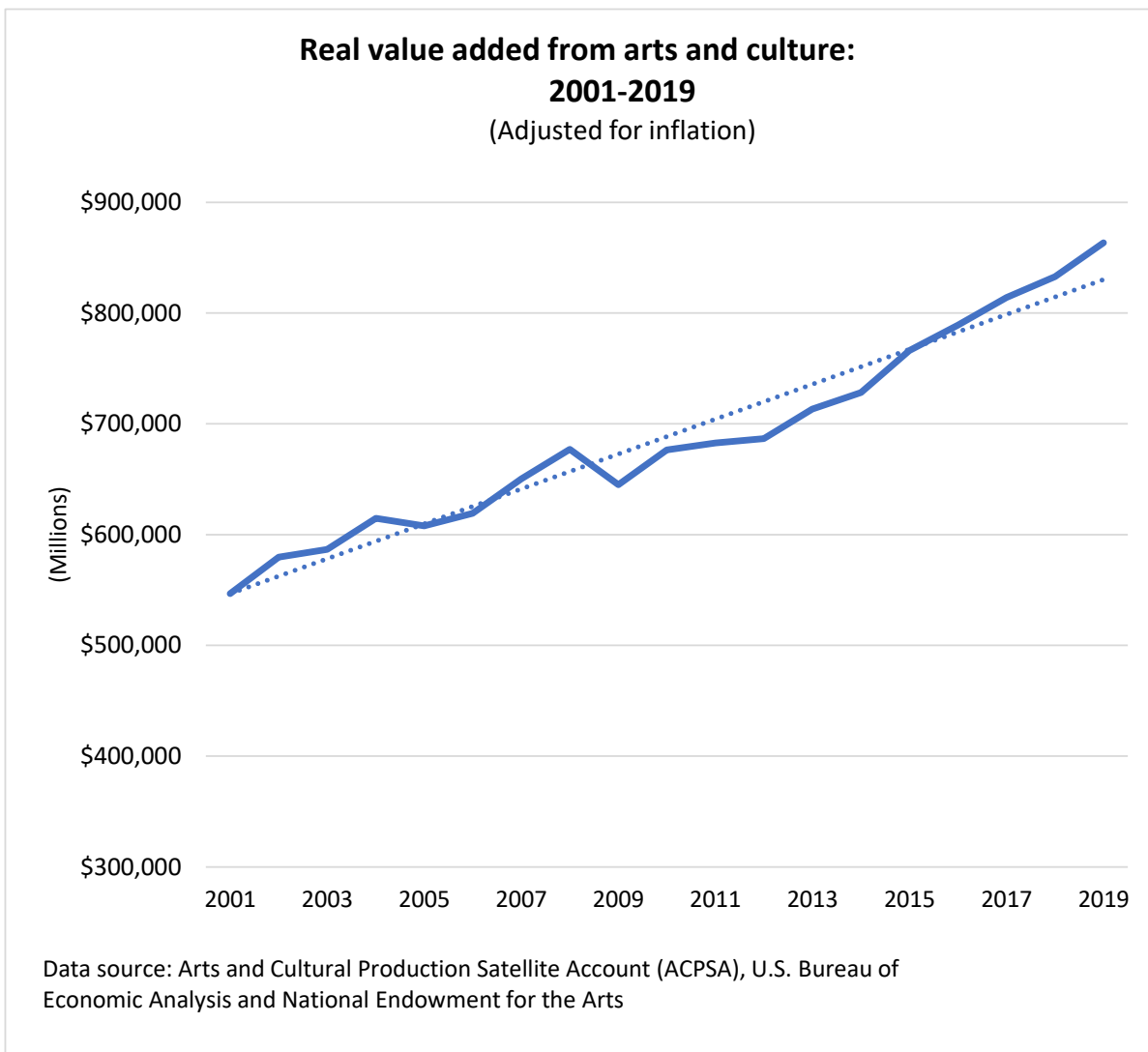
1. In 2019, arts and cultural production contributed \$919.7 billion to the U.S. economy.
  - That production amounted to 4.3 percent of U.S. GDP.

2. Arts and culture surpasses a number of other sectors such as transportation and warehousing and agriculture (including forestry, fishing, and hunting).<sup>1</sup>
  - The value added by arts and culture to the U.S. economy was five times greater than the value added by the agriculture sector.
  - Arts and culture added \$223 billion more to the U.S. economy than did transportation and warehousing.

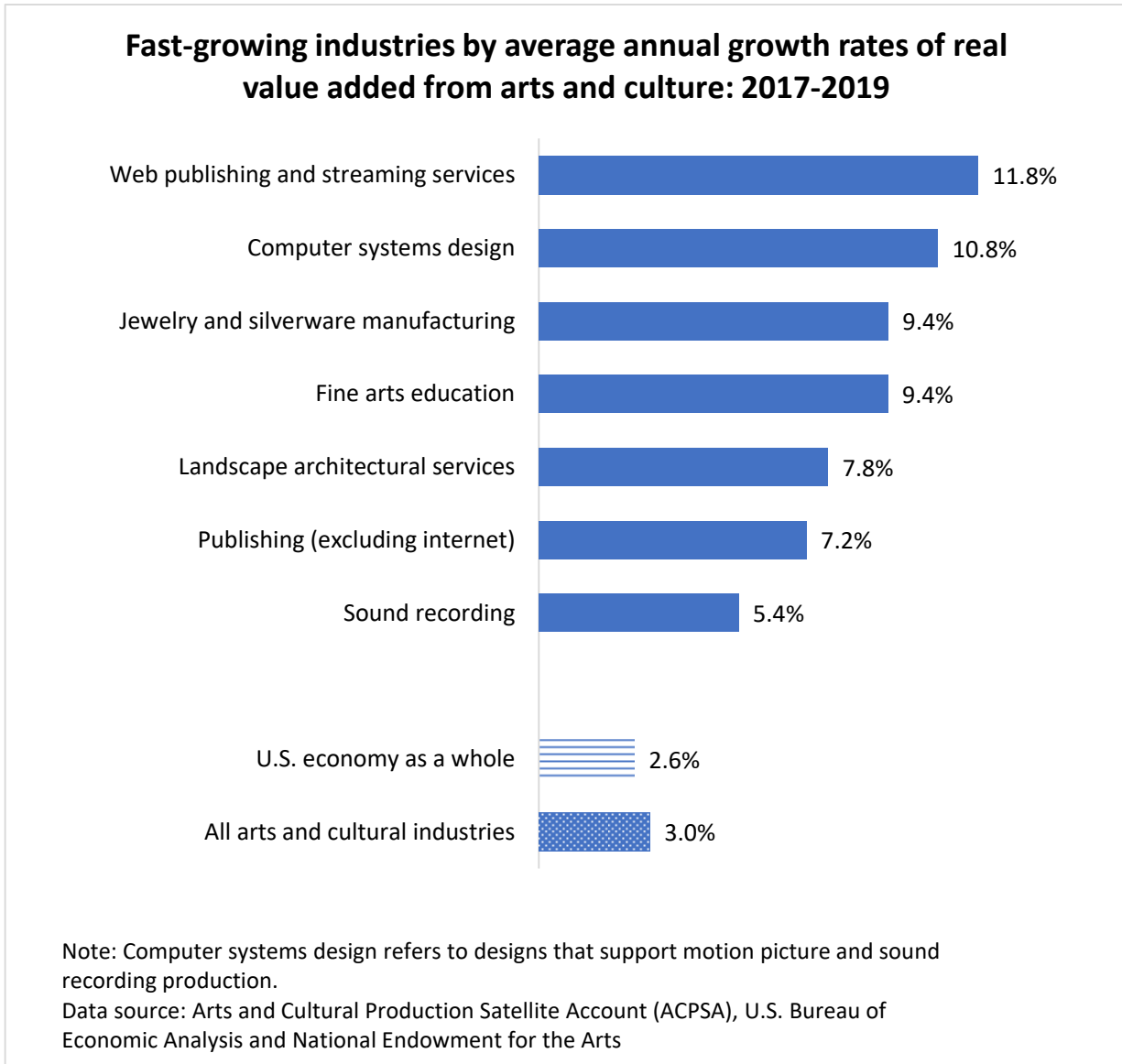


## II. Trends in Arts and Cultural Production

1. For two decades, the total economic value added by arts and cultural production has generally risen.
  - Over the most recent three-year period (2017-2019), the average annual growth rate of value added by arts and culture (adjusted for inflation) was 3 percent, slightly greater than the 2.58 percent growth rate of the total U.S. economy.<sup>2</sup>



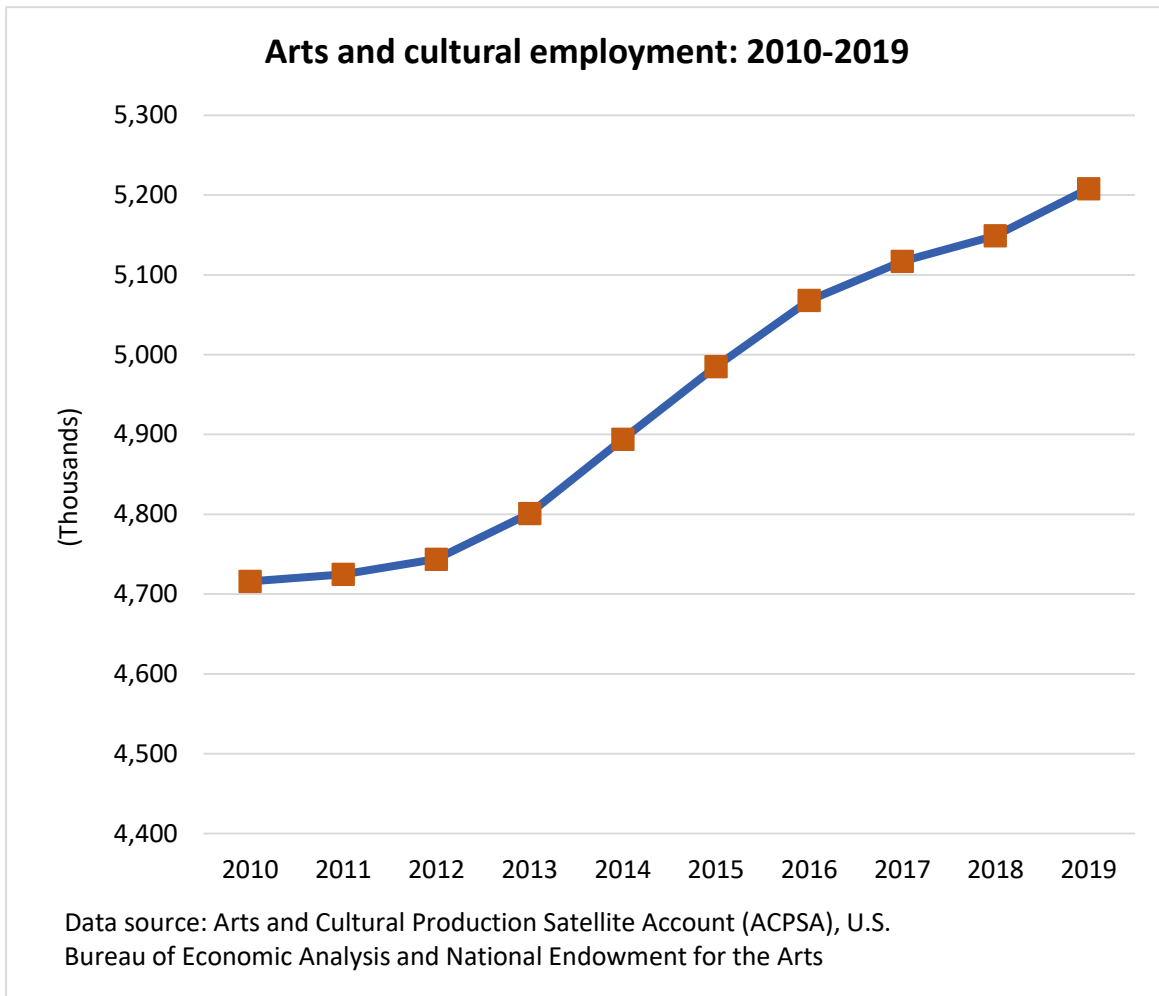
2. The fastest-growing industries producing arts and cultural goods and services include web publishing and streaming, publishing (including arts-related software publishing such as gaming and photo-finishing software), and sound recording.<sup>3</sup>
- The total value added to the U.S. economy by web publishing and streaming grew by an average annual rate of 11.8 percent from 2017 to 2019.
  - The value added by publishing grew by 7.2 percent over the same three-year period.
  - The value added by sound recording industries grew by 5.4 percent.



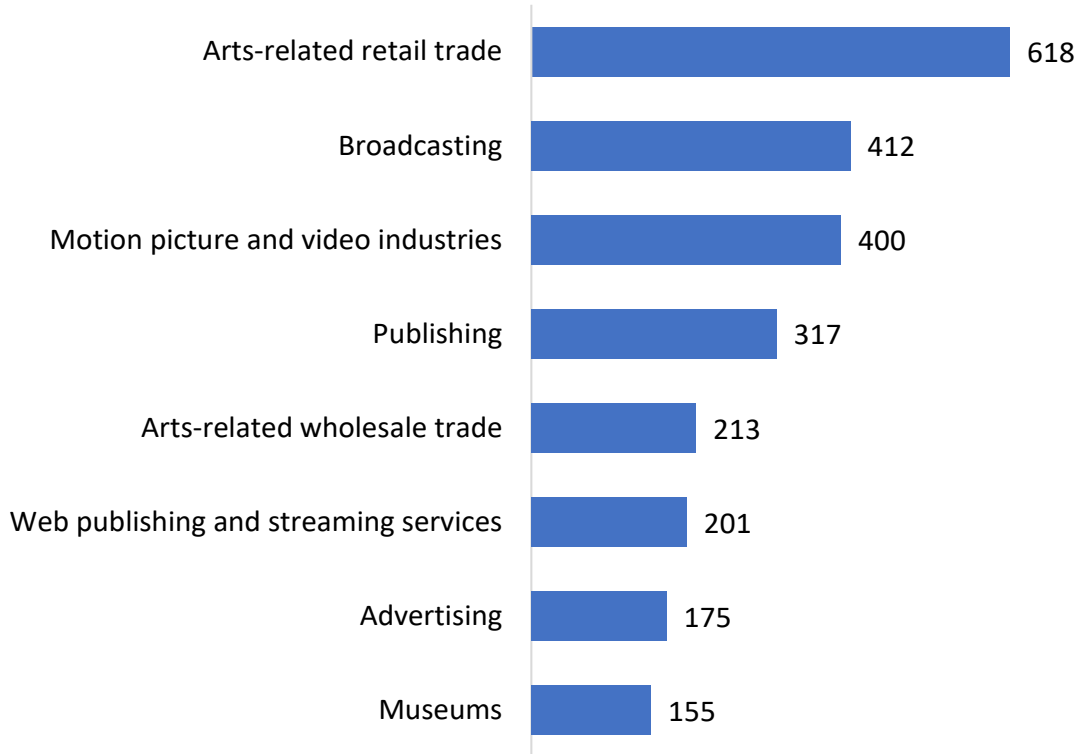
### III. Workers Engaged in Arts and Cultural Production

1. In 2019, the arts and cultural sector employed 5.2 million wage and salary workers.
  - Compensation for those workers topped \$446 billion that year.

2. The number of workers employed to produce arts and cultural goods and services has steadily risen since 2010, following the Great Recession.
  - Between 2010 and 2019, the arts and cultural economy added 492,000 workers.



**Top-ranking industries by number of people employed to produce arts and cultural goods and services: 2019**  
(Thousands)



Data source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts

#### IV. Consumer Spending on Admissions to Performing Arts Events

1. In 2019, consumers spent \$28.5 billion on admissions to performing arts events.
2. Between 2001 and 2019, consumer spending on admissions to the performing arts, as a share of all U.S. consumer spending, rose from just over 0.14 percent to nearly 0.20 percent.

#### Personal consumption expenditures on performing arts events: 2019 (in millions)

Performing arts	\$28,503
Theater, musical theaters, and opera	\$18,315
Music groups and artists <sup>1</sup>	\$3,952
Other performing arts <sup>2</sup>	\$3,266
Symphony orchestras and chamber groups	\$2,190
Dance	\$780

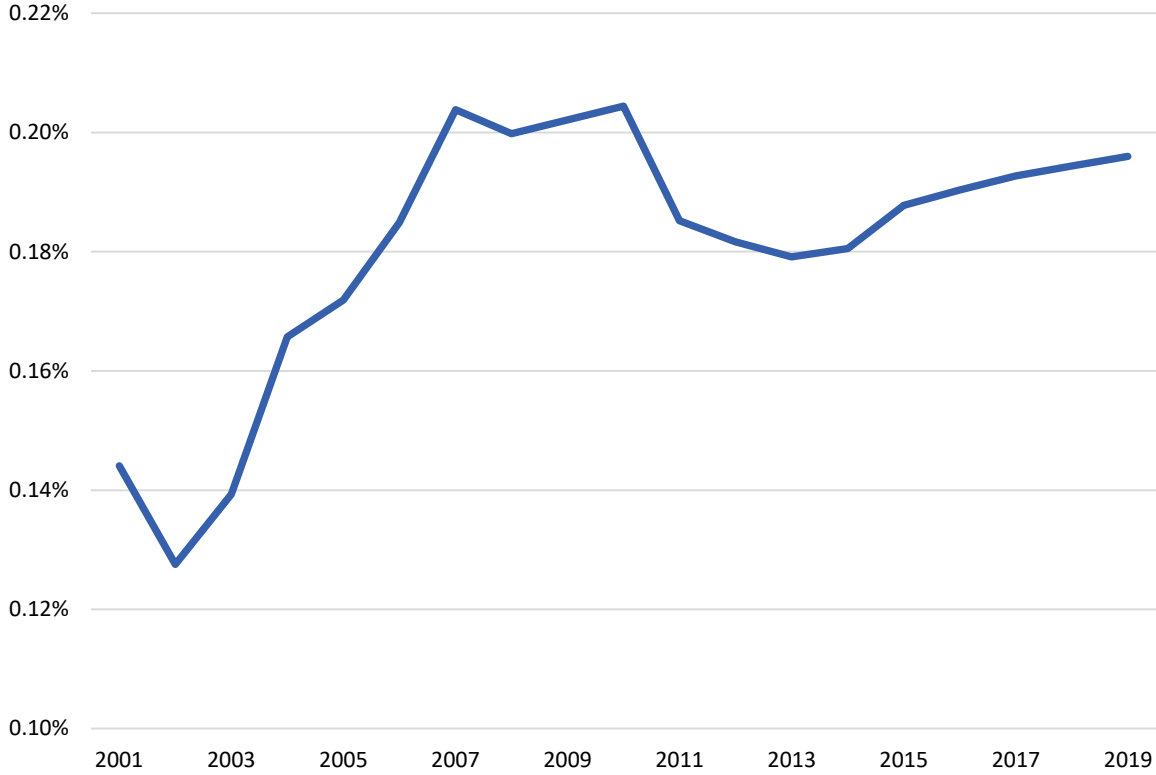
<sup>1</sup> Includes jazz, rock, and country music performances

<sup>2</sup> Includes carnivals, circuses, ice-skating shows, and magic acts

Data source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA),  
U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts



### Consumer spending on admissions to performing arts events, as a share of all personal consumer spending: 2001-2019



Data source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts; Personal Consumption Expenditure by Major Type of Product, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

## V. Arts and Cultural Contributions to the Creative Economy

1. Arts and cultural production comprises nearly half of the “creative economy.”<sup>4</sup>
  - In 2019, copyright-intensive industries contributed \$1.2 trillion to the U.S. economy. Of that value, \$584 billion stemmed from the production of arts and cultural goods and services.
2. Between 2017 and 2019, average annual growth in production of copyright-intensive arts and cultural goods and services grew 4.1 percent.
  - Average annual growth in production was particularly strong for web publishing and streaming, publishing, and sound recording.

### Value-added by copyright-intensive industries: 2019

(Millions)

	Total value added	Value added from arts and cultural production
All copyright-intensive industries	\$1,191,271	\$584,485
Broadcasting <sup>1</sup>	\$297,603	\$155,794
Web publishing and streaming <sup>2</sup>	\$125,571	\$110,497
Publishing	\$299,974	\$103,107
Motion picture and video industries	\$73,110	\$69,236
Performing arts companies and independent artists, writers, and performers	\$61,892	\$60,883
Advertising	\$86,609	\$34,336
Specialized design	\$25,277	\$23,463
Sound recording	\$14,753	\$13,581
Photographic services	\$9,000	\$8,831
Computer systems design <sup>3</sup>	\$197,482	\$4,757

<sup>1</sup> Arts-related broadcasting excludes sports.

<sup>2</sup> See the endnotes to this summary report for more information about the industry labeled "web publishing and streaming."

<sup>3</sup> Refers to computer systems design supporting motion picture production and sound recording.

Data source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts

## Average annual growth rates of real value added by arts and culture: 2017-2019

Copyright-intensive industries only

All copyright-intensive industries	4.1%
Web publishing and streaming <sup>1</sup>	11.8%
Computer systems design <sup>2</sup>	10.8%
Publishing	7.2%
Sound recording	5.4%
Advertising	4.6%
Performing arts companies and independent artists, writers, and performers	3.8%
Specialized design	3.1%
Photographic services	3.1%
Broadcasting <sup>3</sup>	0.2%
Motion picture and video industries	-4.0%

<sup>1</sup> See the endnotes to this summary report for more information about the industry labeled "web publishing and streaming."

<sup>2</sup> Refers to computer systems design supporting motion picture production and sound recording.

<sup>3</sup> Arts-related broadcasting excludes sports.

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### Arts and Cultural Production as Investment

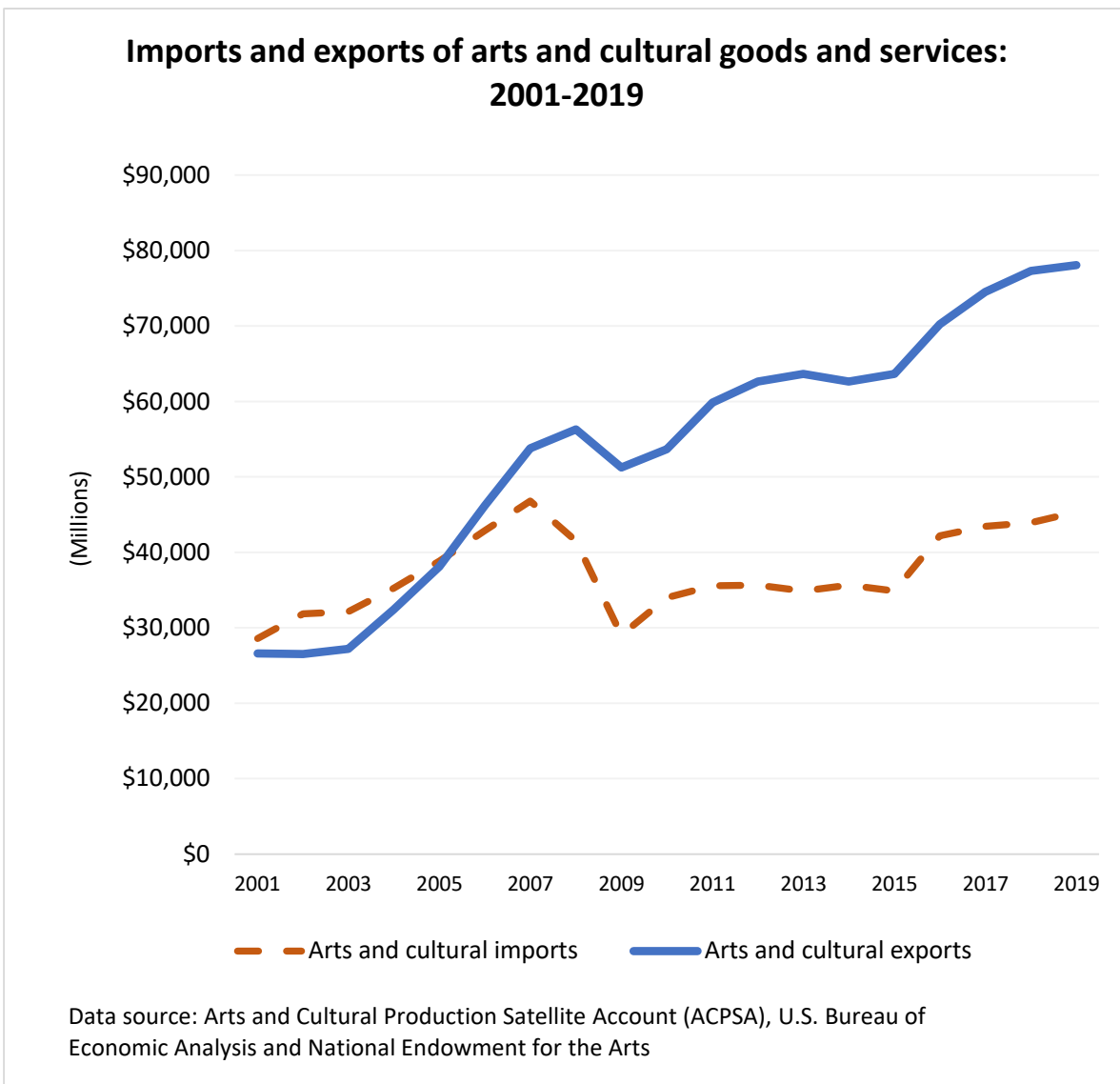
Since 2013, the Bureau of Economic Analysis' definition of investment has included the capitalization of intangible assets, including "entertainment originals." Entertainment originals include: theatrical movies; long-lived television programs; books; music; and other "miscellaneous entertainment" such as scripts and scores for the performing arts, greeting card designs, and stock photography.

In 2019, investment in entertainment, literary, and artistic originals reached \$90.7 billion dollars, up from \$84 billion in 2017.

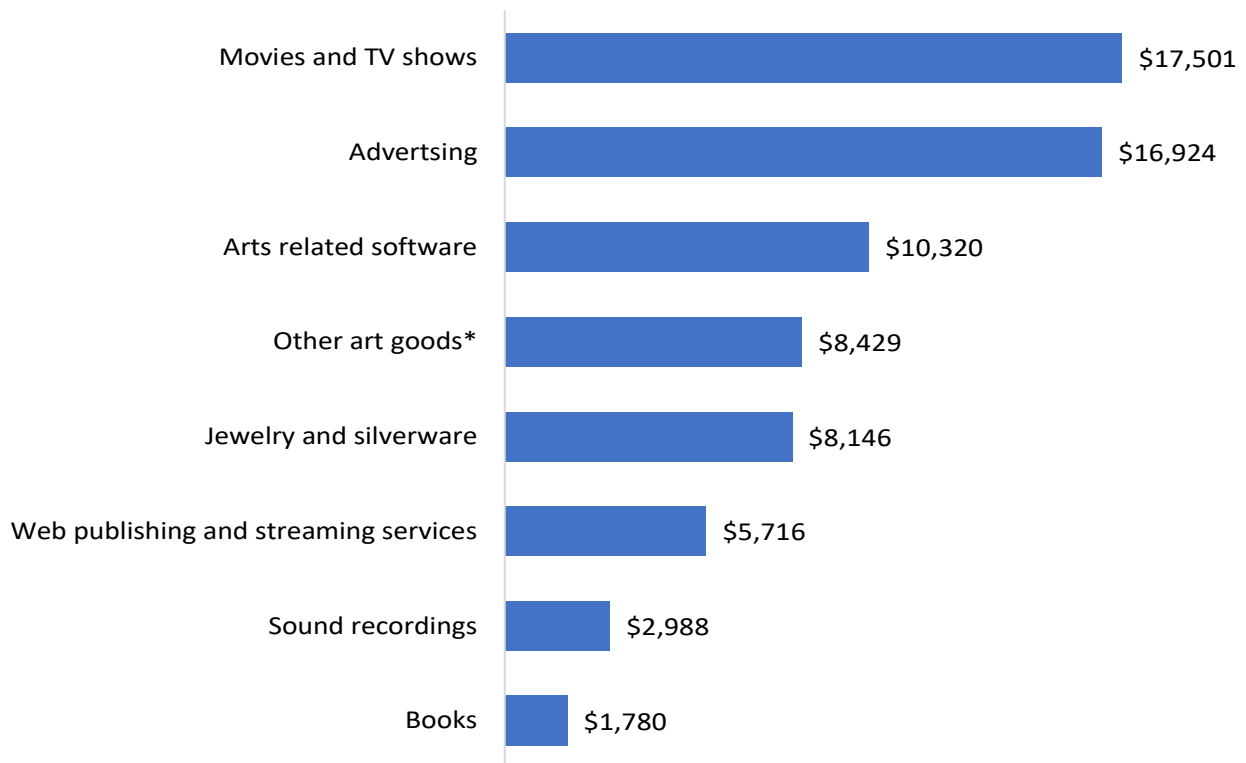
**VI. Exports of Arts and Cultural Goods and Services**

1. The U.S. exports more arts and cultural goods and services than it imports, resulting in a trade surplus.
  - In 2019, the U.S. exported nearly \$33 billion more in arts and cultural goods and services than it imported.

2. The arts and cultural trade surplus has increased since 2006, when it was \$3.3 billion.
  - Arts and cultural exports are driven by movies and TV programs, advertising, and arts-related software.



## Top U.S. exports of arts and cultural goods and services: 2019 (Millions)



\* "Other art goods include the manufacture of selected art goods such as art supplies (e.g., brushes and canvas), blown glass objects, and pottery.

Source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National

### Countries Importing U.S. Movies, TV Shows, and Advertising Services

Trade data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis show that the United Kingdom imports more U.S. movies and TV shows than any other country. In 2018 (the most recent year of data), the U.K. imported \$201 million in U.S. movies and television programming.

Other countries importing relatively large values of movies and TV programming included Australia (\$67 million) and Canada (\$62 million).

The U.S.'s other North American neighbor, Mexico, is not shown in the BEA data as a large importer of U.S. movies and TV. Mexico, however, did import \$234 million in U.S. advertising services. Although a large amount, Mexico's outlays on U.S. advertising fell short of U.K. imports of this service--\$1 billion in 2018.

Germany and Japan also imported large values of U.S. advertising services--\$534 million and \$518 million, respectively, in 2018.

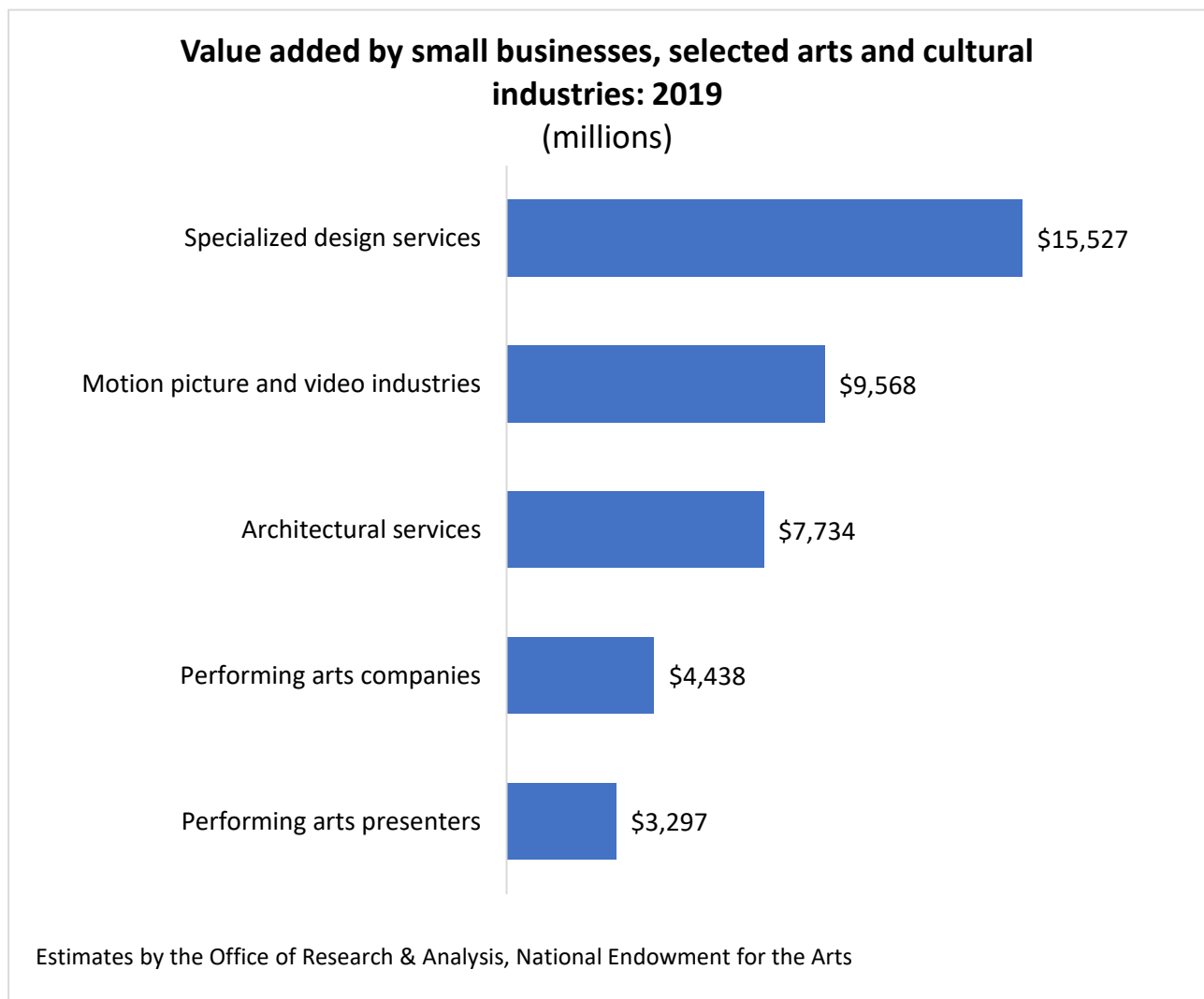
Note: Exports of movies and television programming refer to the use of licenses to reproduce and/or distribute the audiovisual content.

For more information, see [U.S. Trade in Services, by Type of Service and by Country or Affiliation](#), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

## VII. Contributions to the Arts Economy by Non-Employers and Small Businesses

1. In 2019, non-employer businesses (those employing no workers such as independent contractors and sole proprietors) and small businesses (establishments employing fewer than 20 employees) accounted for more than \$100 billion in value added by selected arts and cultural industries.  
<sup>5</sup>(See [“Value added by non-employer establishments, and by small businesses, selected arts and cultural industries: 2019”](#))

- Sole proprietors and other non-employers contributed half of the \$44.8 billion in arts and cultural value added by “independent artists, writers, and performers.”
- In producing arts and cultural goods and services, specialized design industries (e.g., industrial, graphic, and interior design services) contributed \$23.5 billion to the 2019 arts economy. Of that value, more than 60 percent was produced by small businesses.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The sectors given are not mutually exclusive. For example, arts and cultural production includes parts of the construction sector—namely, the building of arts and cultural facilities; travel and tourism includes related performing arts spending.

<sup>2</sup>Inflation-adjusted estimates are measured in chained 2012 dollars.

<sup>3</sup>In this report, “other information services” is labeled “web publishing and streaming.” The category also includes non-government libraries and archives and other services such as stock photo agencies.

<sup>4</sup>The Arts Endowment’s Office of Research & Analysis defines the “creative economy” as value added by industries that the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has identified as copyright-intensive. See [“Intellectual Property and the U.S. Economy: 2016 Update,”](#) Economics & Statistics Administration and U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

<sup>5</sup>“Sole proprietors” compose the largest share of many non-employers in the arts. In 2018, for example, sole proprietors accounted for 96 percent of all non-employers in the industry labeled “independent artists, writers, and performers.” Sole proprietors are required to attach a Schedule C to their individual tax returns if they meet certain criteria. According to the IRS, an activity qualifies as a business if the proprietor’s purpose for engaging in the activity is for income or profit and the sole proprietor does the activity with continuity and regularity. For more information, see the IRS’ [Instructions for Schedule C](#).

In addition to sole proprietors, non-employers can also be incorporated (“C” or “S” corporations), or they can be partnerships.