

STATE OF NYC DANCE

2023

Key Findings Summary

ACCESSIBILITY & INTERACTIVE FEATURES

This document is designed with a number of features to optimize accessibility for low-vision scenarios and electronic screen readers. In addition, interactive elements have been added to aid all readers.

Digital Accessibility

- PDF/UA-1 standard tags are used which have been tested to work best with modern screen readers in Adobe Acrobat. [Tips and keyboard shortcuts for navigating Acrobat with a screen reader](#)
- The layout has been designed with threaded text frames to maintain a linear flow for screen readers.
- Emphasized text nested inside the body is indicated with [square brackets] for screen reader users.
- Heading tags are used hierarchically:
H1 = page title
H2 = page subhead
H3 = body head
H4 = body subhead
- Body text is tagged as P.
- Bullets are set automatically for easier navigation using screen readers.
- Alt text metadata has been added to describe complicated layouts or images.
- Page numbers and decorative elements are tagged as artifacts.

Visual Accessibility

- Headings and body introductions are set at 21 points, which is considered large print by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH).
- Body text is set at 16 points, which is considered enlarged by the APH.
- Infographic labels are set in heavier weights to increase readability.
- High contrast has been maintained by using black body text.
- Low contrast colors have been avoided for essential text and figures.
- Ample white space has been applied (to page margins and line spacing) to make pages more readable by providing contrast to the print and creating luminance around the text.

Interactivity

- Hyperlinks to external webpages or external documents have been added. Hyperlinks are called out with an underline and accent color.

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

In 2019, Dance/NYC began to conceptualize the fifth iteration of its research initiative the State of NYC Dance. While the organization had an established precedent for researching the dance sector and the inequities it experiences, previous studies only considered the sector through a nonprofit institutional lens, excluding individual workers and a subset of diverse financial structures (like sole proprietorships and LLCs) that are central to how the dance industry and its workers operate.

This nonprofit-centric approach was a narrow lens through which to study the sector. Then in 2020, as organizational priorities shifted, the pandemic arrived, and a racial reckoning occurred, Dance/NYC even more strongly committed to centering individual workers in sector-wide initiatives.

As a result, the *State of NYC Dance 2023* report generated the *Dance Industry Census*, a first-of-its-kind effort to count every dance worker and dance entity in the New York City metropolitan area. The study's primary goal was to gather a critical mass of information on the economic realities of individuals and entities working in the sector, to better understand their relationships to one another, and to more accurately capture their stories.

[The *Dance Industry Census* engaged significant proportions of individual workers and entities through its iterative mixed-method research approach. About 27% of the estimated 6,000 dance workers and 23% of the estimated 1,700 entities provided survey responses. In addition to survey input, nearly 250 dance workers provided input at seven in-person and two virtual roundtable events. The study was also supported by two advisory groups: The Dance Workforce Resilience 2022 Task Force and the 2023 DWR Advisory Group.]

KEY FINDINGS

The NYC dance industry is contending with systemic inequity, changing audience participation, and ever-evolving revenue models. Despite a level of fragility, dance workers, organizations, groups, projects, and businesses continue to create and share work with audiences and participants via many means, benefiting from strong connections to education and health sectors. Passionate dance workers persist in a project-based, freelance world, caught between opposing societal forces, navigating pandemic challenges, and enduring financial insecurity.

FINDING 1

New York City dance is more diverse than the arts workforce but less diverse than New York City as a whole.

FINDING 2

Dance production, presentation, education, and administration are present in a broad diversity of virtual and physical places.

FINDING 3

Dance continues to contend with systemic inequity.

FINDING 4

The dance industry is deeply interconnected with education, health care, and wellness.

FINDING 5

New York City dance is evolving in terms of content, entities, and workforce.

FINDING 6

The dance industry continues to navigate the effects of the pandemic with fragility.

FINDING 7

Dance is not financially sustainable for most of its workers.

FINDING 8

Despite challenging conditions, dance workers find their work fulfilling and choose to persevere.

FINDING 9

Dance work tends to be project-specific, independent, and freelance, and occurs with minimal resources and protections.

FINDING 10

The dance industry is caught between opposing forces that affect how dance exists in society.



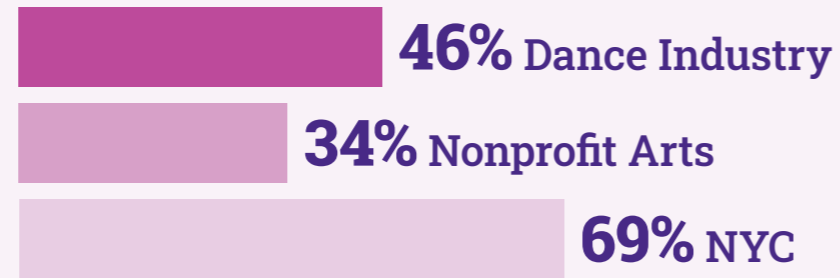
FINDING 1

New York City dance is more diverse than the arts workforce but less diverse than New York City as a whole.

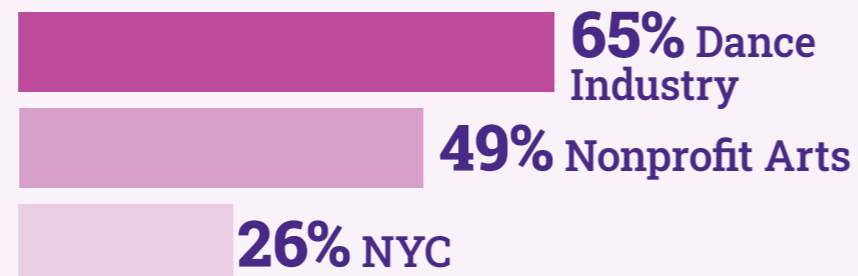
The Census pool is majority Cisgender woman, Millennial, and non-Immigrant. However, Census takers are more diverse than the New York City nonprofit arts workforce in terms of BIPOC, Trans/non-binary/non-Cisgender and LGBTQIA+ representation, as per 2019 data collected by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. That research includes demographic data for 7,000 workers at a set of nonprofit cultural organizations funded by New York City.

Dance Industry Census Identities

BIPOC



Millennial



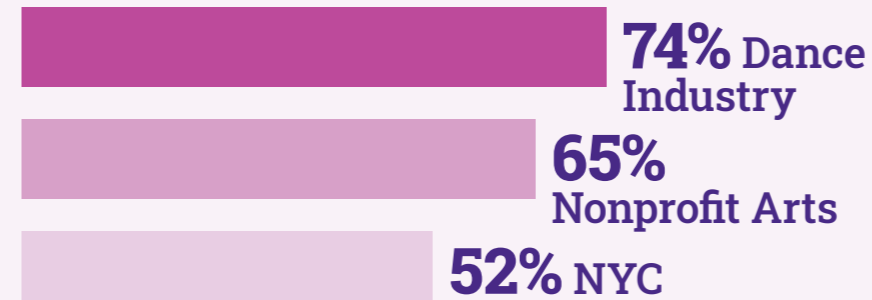
Disabled



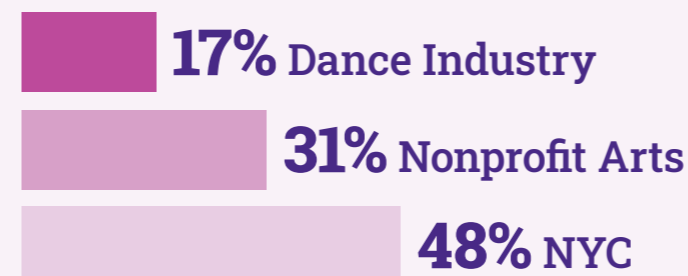
LGBTQIA+



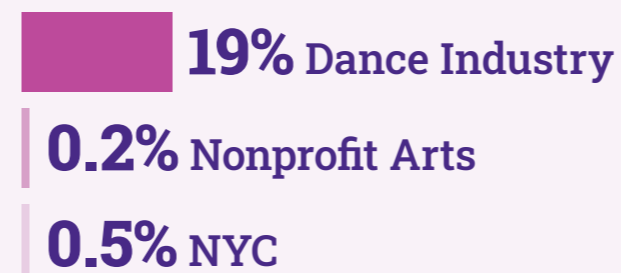
Cisgender woman/Woman



Cisgender man/Man



Transgender/Non-binary/Not Cisgender



CONSIDERING EQUITY

Data from previous research suggests that the dance industry has become more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. At the same time, Census data trends less diverse in terms of age and maintains majority Cis-woman representation.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? Who is missing from the data?
- ? What factors contributed to decreased representation of GenX dance workers?

Sources: Nonprofit arts: [2019 New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Workforce Demographics Pilot Study Results](#) by SMU DataArts. NYC demographics: 2020 US Census Bureau American Community Survey and Decennial Census; New York State Department of Health. These other data sources use terminology and language on race, gender and sexual orientation that is not used or supported by Dance/NYC.

Notes: This report cites nearest equivalent data from these other sources when equivalent data was not available. Cisgender woman/woman is compared to the female identity category in other data sources. Cisgender man is compared to the male identity category in other data sources. Not Cisgender includes agender, bigender, gender fluid, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, intersex, queer, questioning, transgender, transgender man, transgender woman and two-spirit. Additional detail available in the research data. Millennial is defined as ages 24-41 at the time of data collection.

2

FINDING 2



Dance production, presentation, education, and administration are present in a broad diversity of virtual and physical places.

While dance work occurs throughout Greater New York City, the vast majority of dance workers and entities continue to be based in Manhattan and Brooklyn, consistent with previous Dance/NYC research. While many entities are headquartered in dance worker homes, more than one-third of dance workers commute nearly an hour for dance work. They are most often working in public spaces and performance spaces (i.e., studios and theaters), and in the digital realm via virtual programs.

Home



70%
live in Manhattan or Brooklyn



66%
of entities operate out of homes

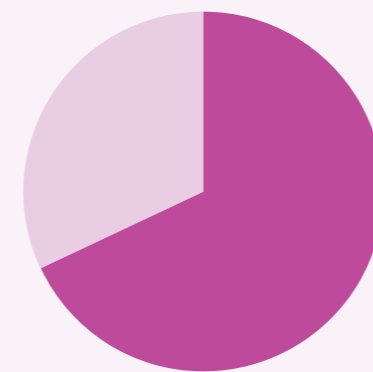


17%
live in Queens, the Bronx, or Staten Island



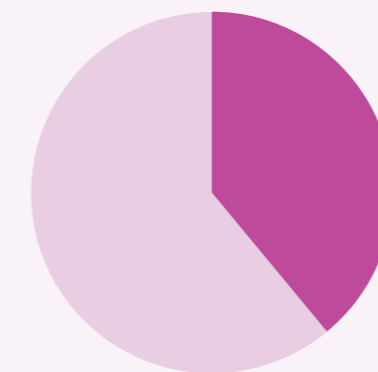
47%
work at home AND other places

Work



68%
of entities are headquartered in Manhattan or Brooklyn

Commute



39%
commute **45+ minutes** to and from dance work

Programming

Public Space



53%
of individuals

Performance Space



60%
of individuals

Digital Space



43%
of individuals



65%
of entities



65%
of entities



37%
of entities

CONSIDERING EQUITY

Factors related to access to space and commute time (and related costs) may be driving a disproportionate distribution of dance workers to live in Manhattan and Brooklyn. However, there are likely additional dance workers living in areas outside of Manhattan and Brooklyn that were not reached through this research.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? What motivates dance workers to commute to work at a particular studio? Would they work closer to home if they were able to access quality and affordable space?
- ? Is the prevalence of work in public space related to pandemic-inspired programming or programs like NYC Open Culture?
- ? Do freelancers consider the labor they expend organizing and managing their dance careers to be "work"?



FINDING 3A

Dance continues to contend with systemic inequity.

The Census reflects gaps in how New York City dance understands and responds to white supremacy despite ongoing conversation, historic national watershed moments, and significant training work. BIPOC, disabled, and immigrant workers in the field continue to have greater needs than white, non-disabled, and US-born workers.

Annual Income

Immigrant vs Non-immigrant

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ -30% less

Transgender/Non-binary/Not Cisgender vs Cisgender man

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ -40% less

Has Savings*

Immigrant vs Non-immigrant

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ -22% less

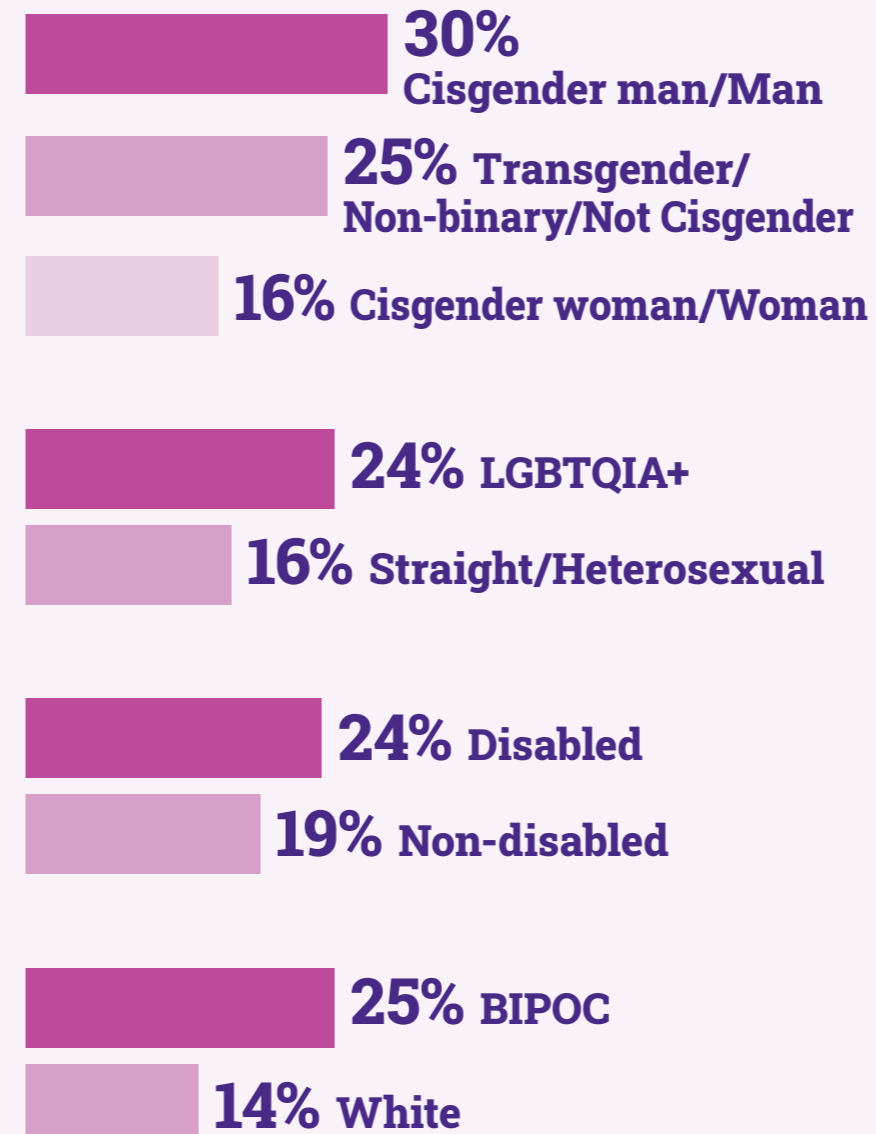
Disabled vs Non-disabled

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ -12% less

BIPOC vs White

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ -22% less

Filed Unemployment



CONSIDERING EQUITY

Particular identity groups seem to be less engaged in certain roles. Disabled dance workers are less represented on boards of directors and as managers/agents. And fewer immigrant dance workers hold staff member roles.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? What are the factors that keep BIPOC, immigrant, and disabled workers from positions of leadership?
- ? What are the accessibility needs of disabled workers, and how can they be met?

*Note:

63% of BIPOC dance workers have financial savings vs 81% of white workers.
 58% of immigrant dance workers have financial savings vs 74% of non-immigrant workers.
 64% of disabled dance workers have financial savings vs 73% of non-disabled workers.

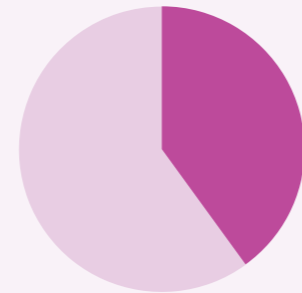
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FINDING 3B 

Dance continues to contend with systemic inequity.

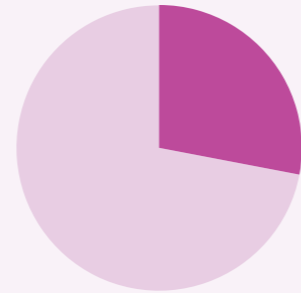
While the Census reflects progress, particularly in terms of BIPOC representation in dance leadership roles, there is still more work to be done in areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice. Many entities do not maintain diversity, equity and inclusion policies or accessibility accommodations. Others address these issues in very narrow ways.

DEI Policy



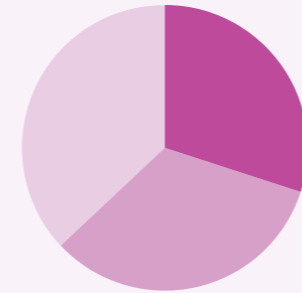
40%
do not maintain diversity, equity, and inclusion policies

The majority have small budgets <\$100K, and some are sole proprietors with minimal capacity.



28%
are addressing cost of access and/or working to diversify representation

Accessibility



30%
do not provide accessibility accommodations



33%
only address physical accessibility

BIPOC Leadership

Higher BIPOC representation in dance leadership roles:

Artistic Director



56% BIPOC
44% white

CEO/Lead



56% BIPOC
44% white

Presenter



60% BIPOC
40% white

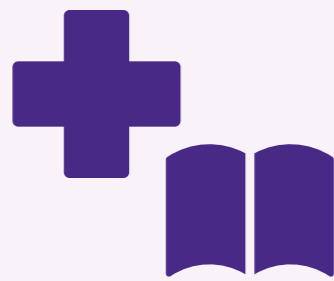
CONSIDERING EQUITY

Smaller-budget entities lack capacity to move the needle on diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice issues. Training and shared resource opportunities directed to this part of the industry may be helpful.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? How can dance entities become safer spaces for BIPOC people to work and thrive?
- ? What are definitions or guidelines that can guide the industry toward more expansive accessibility and justice practices?

FINDING 4



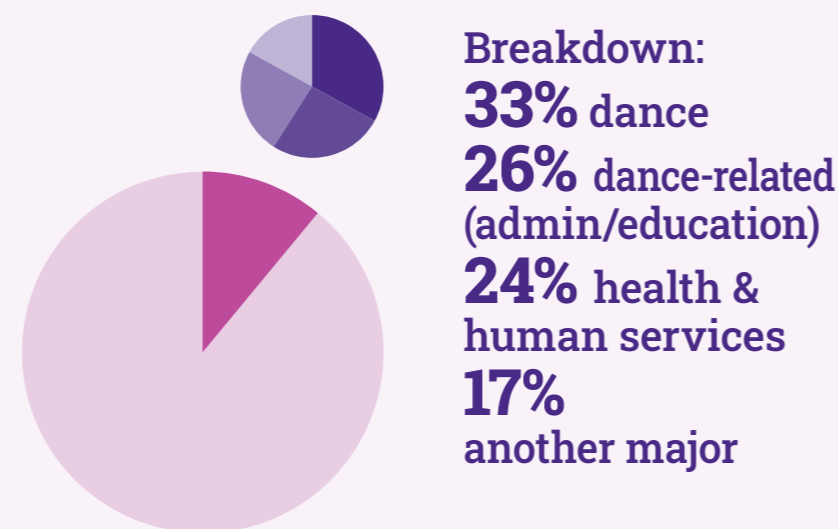
The dance industry is deeply interconnected with education, health care, and wellness.

New York City dance has strong connection and mutual exchange with other human-centered sectors. For example, dance education is, by far, the most prevalent activity in the sector. The majority of dancers are also dance educators. The majority of dance workers who are union-affiliated are part of education unions. Half of presented work occurs at educational sites like schools, colleges, and universities. Aside from dance and dance adjacent subjects, dance students are most often focused on health and human services. Outside of dance, dance workers most often do paid work in human-service fields like education, health care including fitness, and hospitality leisure. All of these connections often allow workers to maintain a multiplicity of roles and skills.

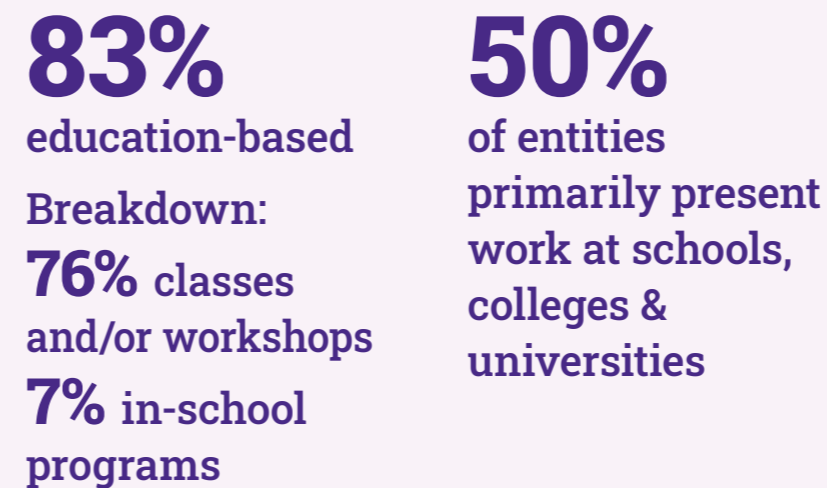
Dance Educators



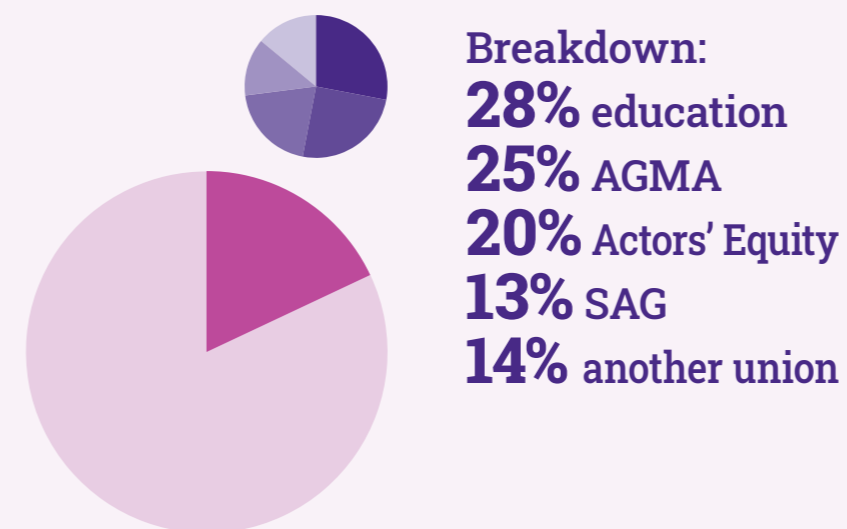
11% Dance Students



Dance Entity Offerings



18% Union Members



Paid Work Outside Dance



CONSIDERING EQUITY

Recent research by [Brookings](#) and [McKinsey & Co.](#) suggests that BIPOC folks remain underrepresented in higher education. However, higher than average proportions of BIPOC, disabled, and immigrant Census takers identified themselves as part-time or full-time students.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

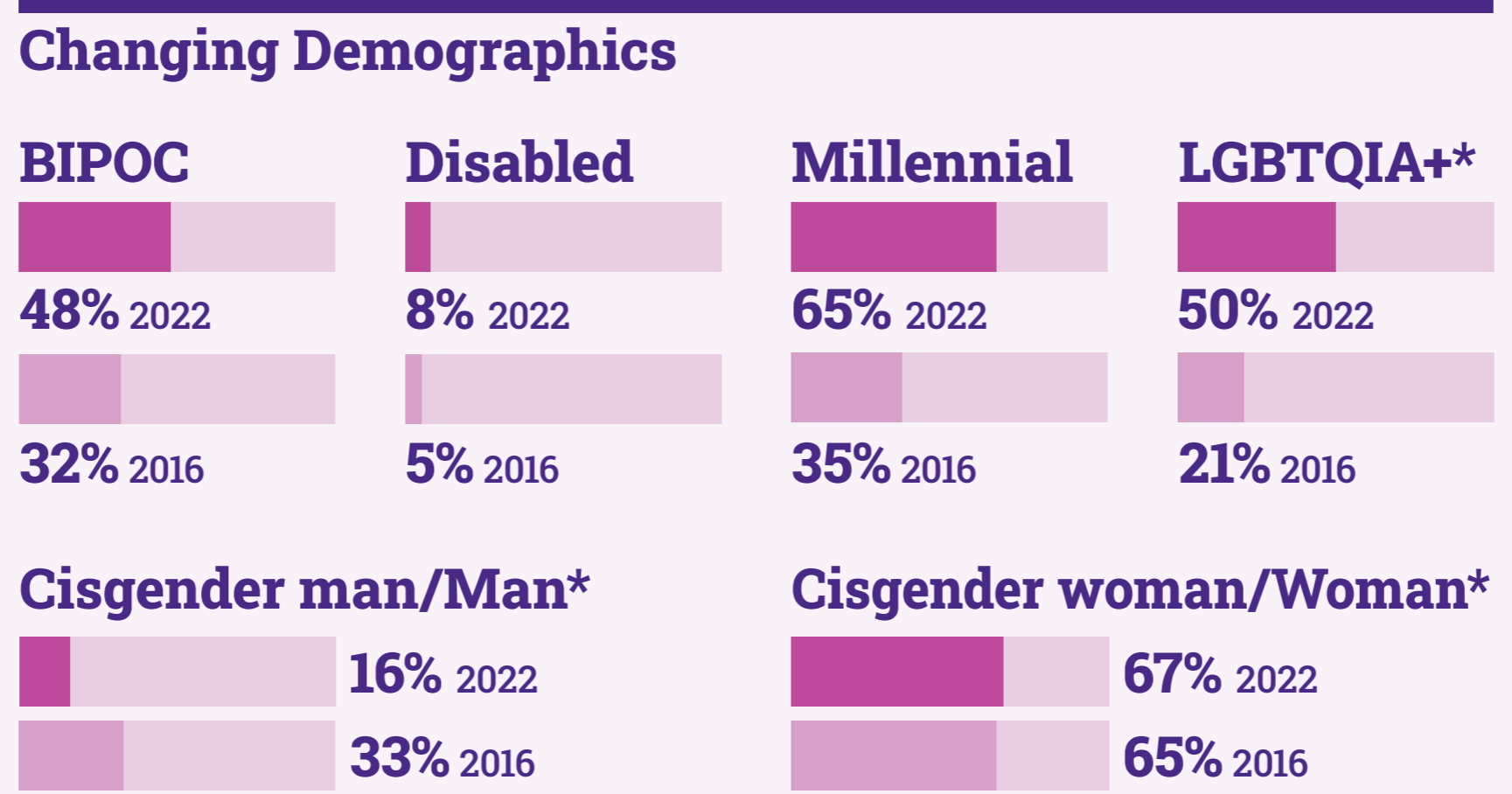
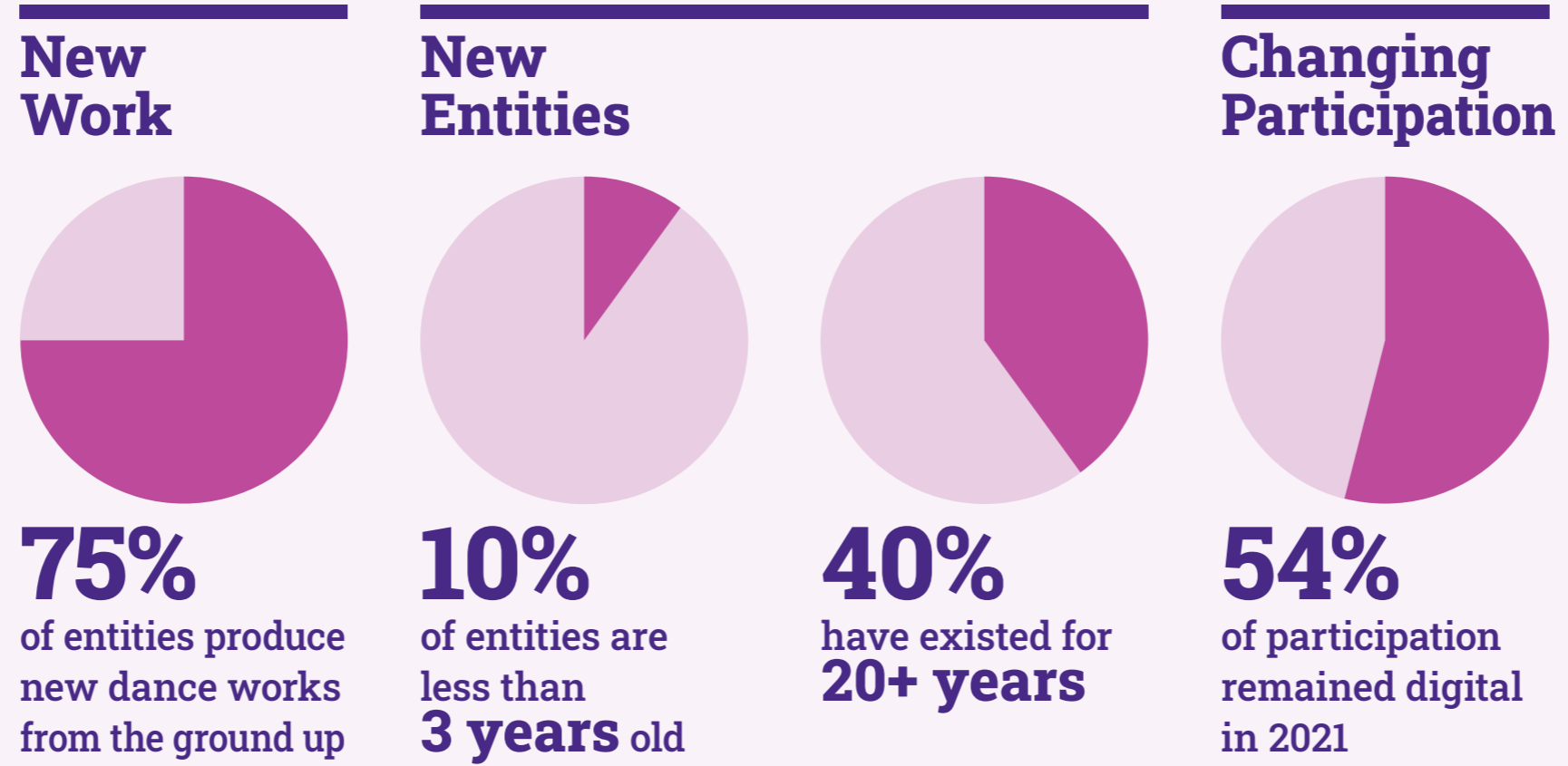
- ? Does the multiplicity of roles fulfilled by dancers contribute to their depth of experience and ultimately impact their dance making?
- ? How does the experience of dance making improve dancers' performance and drive earnings in other sectors



FINDING 5

New York City dance is evolving in terms of content, entities, and workforce.

Census data offers insight into how the sector has changed since the last State of New York City Dance research in 2016, and through the pandemic. At the time of data collection, changes included a large focus on the creation and presentation of new work and an influx of new entities. Participation was also different, with more digital than in-person participation. The workforce has also changed since 2016, with more BIPOC, disabled, Millennial, and LGBTQIA+ representation.



CONSIDERING EQUITY

Since the 2016 *State of NYC Dance*, efforts have been made to create more inclusive terminology so that every individual feels included in research and data. This could connect to the Census demographics, which show significantly more BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ representation, and significantly higher Millennial representation, than in 2016.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

? Are the demographics of Census takers different because the 2016 study only considered dance workers employed by nonprofit organizations?

Source: 2016 Demographic Data: *State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics 2016* by Dance/NYC which focused on dance workers at nonprofit organizations.

*Note: This report cites nearest equivalent data from other sources when equivalent data was not available. Cisgender Woman/Woman data is compared to the female identity category, the LGBTQIA+ data is compared to the LGBT data, and Cisgender Man/Man data is compared to the male identity category from the 2016 State of NYC Dance. The terms "male" and "female" do not align with how Dance/NYC now refers to gender.

6

FINDING 6



The dance industry continues to navigate the effects of the pandemic with fragility.

Financial data collected in 2022 reflects the prior fiscal year, when many entities continued to receive pandemic relief. With that support, the number of entities that ended their fiscal years with balanced budgets or surpluses was consistent with the year prior. Even still, higher reliance on contributed income (as compared to 2016), limited cash liquidity, self-reported weak financial health, and reduced spending reflect ongoing uncertainty.

The arts sector now seems to be enduring new challenges as emergency funding has been discontinued, participation and funding patterns have changed, and the economy continues to be weak.

Financial Picture (2022)

Financial Health

40%
classify financial health as weak or very weak

56%
do not hold a reserve or savings

Budget Size

-4% ↓
drop in avg budget size since pre-pandemic

Expenses

-11% ↓
drop in aggregate spending 2019–2021

Contributed Income

63%
avg contributed income (nonprofits)
vs **55%** avg in 2016

Bottom Line

Many financial indicators reflect the presence of pandemic relief funds, including growth in budget size from 2021 to 2022 and increasing proportion of organizations ending the year with surpluses between 2021 and 2022.

New indicators suggest the climate is once again shifting, and the fragility of the industry is ever apparent as Covid-related relief funding has been discontinued, entities finish expending that income, arts participation (related to earned revenue) is lower than pre-pandemic levels, and funding priorities shift. This all impacts entities and the individuals they engage.

CONSIDERING EQUITY

The average change in budget size reflects positive growth for budget ranges higher than \$50K but declines for the smallest entities. These entities also access the lowest proportion (55% avg) of contributed funds.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? Who are the people or entities contributing to dance?
- ? How will dance be impacted by changing funding priorities that are becoming apparent throughout the nonprofit sector?
- ? What is the overall economic impact of the dance sector on New York City?
- ? Who is best positioned to weather changes in funding priorities? Who is mostly likely to fold as a result of these shifts?

FINDING 7

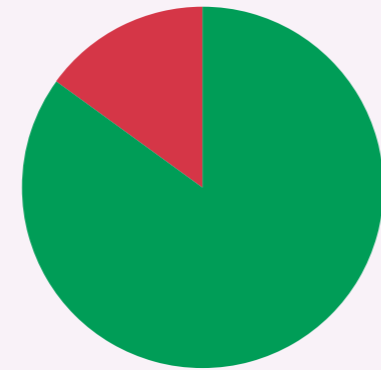


Dance is not financially sustainable for most of its workers.

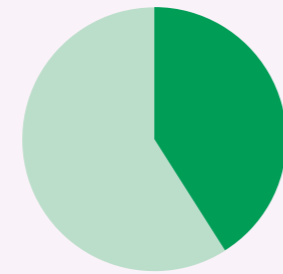
Most dance workers do not earn a living wage from their work in dance. This is particularly true for dancers and choreographers who earn the least. In fact, dancers and choreographers earn less than half of the highest paying roles. Given low wages, more than half of dance workers supplement income with work outside of the industry in order to access and afford basic necessities.

In addition, many workers describe effective hourly rates much lower than reported due to long hours, travel time, childcare costs, and more.

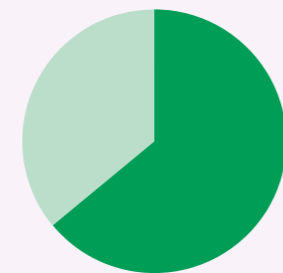
Compensation & Wages



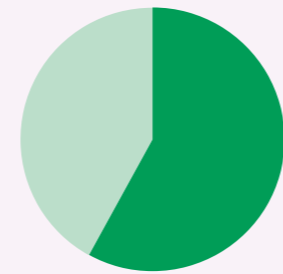
\$22/hr
avg hourly rate
15% below
NYC living wage*



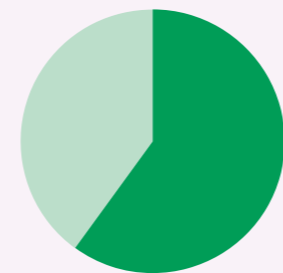
41%
worked in dance
without pay
last year



64%
of entities do not
pay all personnel
a living wage



58%
believe they do not
earn fair wages
for work in dance



60%
of entities have
budgets <\$100K &
limited capacity to
pay a living wage

Income

54%
also work outside
of dance to make
ends meet

<\$46,000
avg total income,
including work
outside the
dance sector

Avg earnings:

\$39,500
dancers &
choreographers

\$44,000
educators

\$46,000
admin staff

\$50,000
artistic directors

\$80,000
CEOs/leads

Dancers & Choreographers



Dancers and
choreographers
earn the lowest
avg total income
of all roles and
less than 50%
of CEOs or
equivalent leads

\$23K/yr
avg earned by
dancers and
choreographers
from dance work

60% of total
income comes
from dance



CONSIDERING EQUITY

There is significant pay disparity between CEOs/equivalent leads and other workers, as CEOs earn more than twice as dancers and choreographers, the lowest paid dance worker roles. This is in addition to previously detailed disproportionate access to pay and financial savings on the part of immigrant, BIPOC, and disabled workers. (Finding 3)

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? What is workers' true income after work-related expenses?
- ? What role does unpaid or volunteer labor play in the dance industry? What is the nature of unpaid work and how is it arranged?
- ? If workers were paid a living wage, what would be the true cost of dance?
- ? How many hours are dance workers truly working for their wages? What is their effective hourly wage? What if their rate included overtime pay?

*Note: MIT's living wage calculator was used as a benchmark for this analysis. This suggests that a living wage for a single person without children in New York City is \$25.65 per hour based on working 2,080 hours per year. Data has been normalized to assume a full-time workload of 40 hours per week.

8

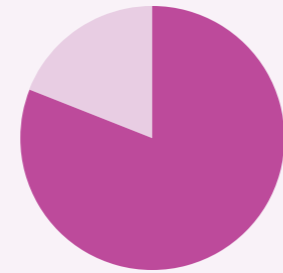
FINDING 8



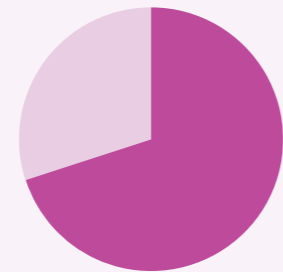
Despite challenging conditions, dance workers find their work fulfilling and choose to persevere.

Dance workers continue to work in dance despite low pay, unreliable income, and the ongoing need to access and afford basic necessities like quality and affordable mental and physical health care. This endurance is perhaps related to “psychic” benefits that are not financial, as dance workers report finding purpose, community, and anchoring in their work. Many sustain longevity in the field even with limited access to resources.

Fulfillment



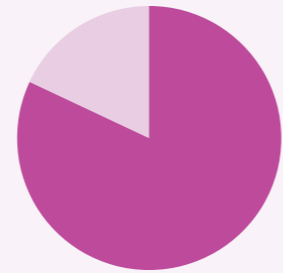
81% of feelings about work in dance are positive; the feeling most often reported was “fulfilled”



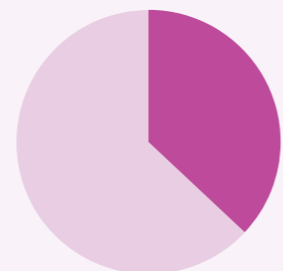
70% consider their work in dance to be a permanent career

10+ years avg worked in dance

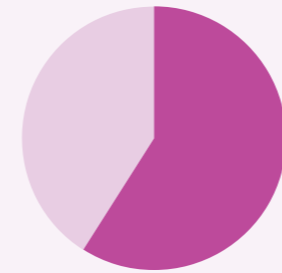
Access to Care



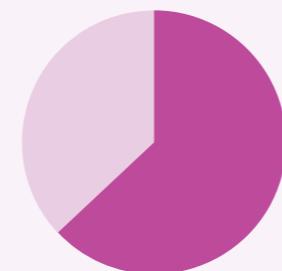
82% do not have access to mental health care



37% do not have access to medical insurance coverage



59% do not have access to dental coverage



63% with coverage
 Coverage Sources:
25% pay for themselves
16% have thru partner
10% have thru parent

Support



30% do not live in close proximity to friends or family



18% are caregivers with dependents

True Cost



37% have not taken sustained time off (a week or more) in the last year



29% worked 5+ jobs in dance the prior year

CONSIDERING EQUITY

While access to benefits like medical insurance is relatively consistent across identity categories, this data does not address the price of that insurance or related out-of-pocket costs, particularly for disabled workers and other people who have needs that require health care at high rates.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? What is the state of mental health in dance?
- ? What is the out-of-pocket cost for health care for dance workers?
- ? Are dance workers' health care needs provided for via coverage?



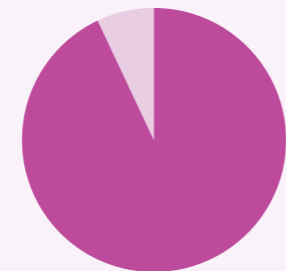
FINDING 9

Dance work tends to be project-specific, independent, and freelance, and occurs with minimal resources and protections.

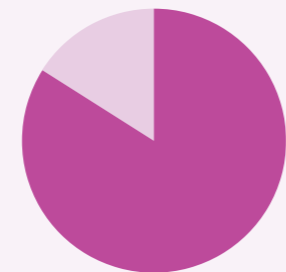
Dance work is full of freelancers and independent business owners who organize work by project, outside of formal business, funding, and employment structures. Many dance workers enjoy the flexibility and control involved in "gig work" but are participating at great risk due to the current lack of provisions for freelance workers. Low wages force many dance workers to work more than they would like to or should. So, even though many dance workers are freelance by choice, they are not able to choose preferred gigs and are not able to benefit from independently stewarding their physical body and/or artistic output.

Freelancing Conditions

Prevalence



93%
of entities hire contractors



84%
of entities hire artists as contractors

Gigs



Nearly **1 in 3** are freelancers by choice

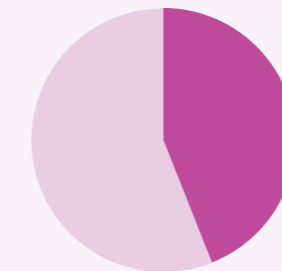


Over **1 in 3** see work in dance as part of the gig economy



Nearly **1 in 2** worked 4 jobs avg in dance last year

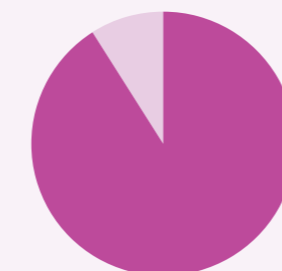
Protections



44%
work without contracts some time



18%
of workers have union protections



91%
of entities are not affiliated with a union

Structure



Nearly **1 in 2** carry out some or all of their work via collectives



64% work independently, outside of formal structures, and support work from their own sources and pockets

CONSIDERING EQUITY

Data indicates a gender disparity with regard to union access and participation, as a larger proportion of Cisgender men are affiliated with unions.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? How is freelance dance work similar to broader gig work in the US? How is it different?
- ? Would dance workers forced into freelancing now prefer gig work?
- ? What is the nature of contracts being used for dance work? Do they reflect living wages and proper protections for the worker and employer?

10

FINDING 10

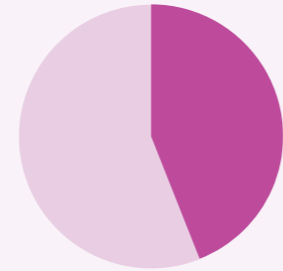
The dance industry is caught between opposing forces that affect how dance exists in society.

Census data reflects a tension that dance workers and entities feel as they operate within a flawed system that names the arts as common goods but does not create conditions for them to thrive. Absent certain conditions, including education, training, and resources, dance entities and workers then struggle between:

1. operating as a business with a structure that does not rely on donors or philanthropic support to sustainably deliver work to the marketplace, and
2. operating under the ethos that dance must be produced regardless of available demand or resources.

Opposing Forces

Dance as Business



43% of entities are B-Corp, LLC/S-Corp/C-Corp, or self-employment/sole proprietorship

These structures typically preclude contributed income and are therefore not reliant on donors/funders.



Consistent requests for training to successfully navigate economic systems*

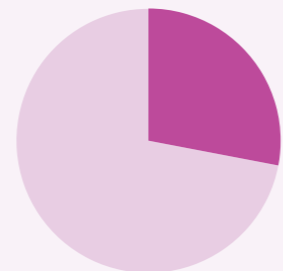
Dance Despite Available Resources



37% of entities do not pay all workers a living wage



64% of jobs paid via cash/uncontracted or 1099 gig



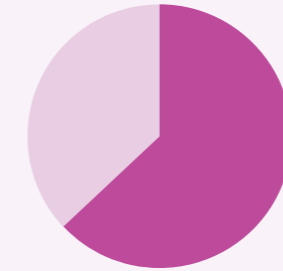
28% of entities are new (i.e., <5 yrs old)



79% are dancers or choreographers despite earning lowest wages



64% are self-financing or funding their work from their own sources and pockets



63% contributed revenue (avg)



Nearly **1 in 10** entities identify fiscal sponsorship as only financial structure

8% do not know their financial structure

CONSIDERING EQUITY

Inequitable access to education, training, and resources is a sustainability factor for individuals and entities. Disparity in education may also contribute to knowledge gaps around legal and fiscal structures such as "sole proprietor" and "fiscal sponsor."

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- ? Why do New Yorkers participate in, support, and value dance?
- ? What types and levels of impact does dance provide to our community?
- ? What considerations do dance workers make before establishing their own entity?

*Note: Dance/NYC Research has collected consistent requests for training in business operations, structures, fundraising, diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice, fundraising, and freelancing.

KEY FINDINGS: WHAT INSIGHTS HAVE WE GAINED?

These findings reveal that New York City dance is **[integral]**, **[interdependent]**, and **[seeking thriving]**. The data tells the story of individuals and entities who navigate fragility and inequitable conditions and continue on driven by passion and commitment to the work they do. While entities engage workers to make and support New York City dance, they do so in the midst of uncertain and challenging financial circumstances and are often unable to properly support or care for their workers. Critically, the health and sustainability of the sector depends on the health and well-being of its workers—and these workers need to be tended to in order to ensure they can survive and thrive in dance. In short, the New York City dance industry is not just or sustainable, and it will require sector-wide, concerted, and intentional effort from each and every one of its stakeholders to advance its vision for the future—one that is focused on tenets of thriving, sustainability, equity, and justice.

Dance. Workforce. Resilience. (DWR) Hub

Visit Hub.Dance.NYC to engage with the full *State of NYC Dance 2023* report and the accompanying tools and resources.

Funders

