

Research Brief #4: Artists' Labor

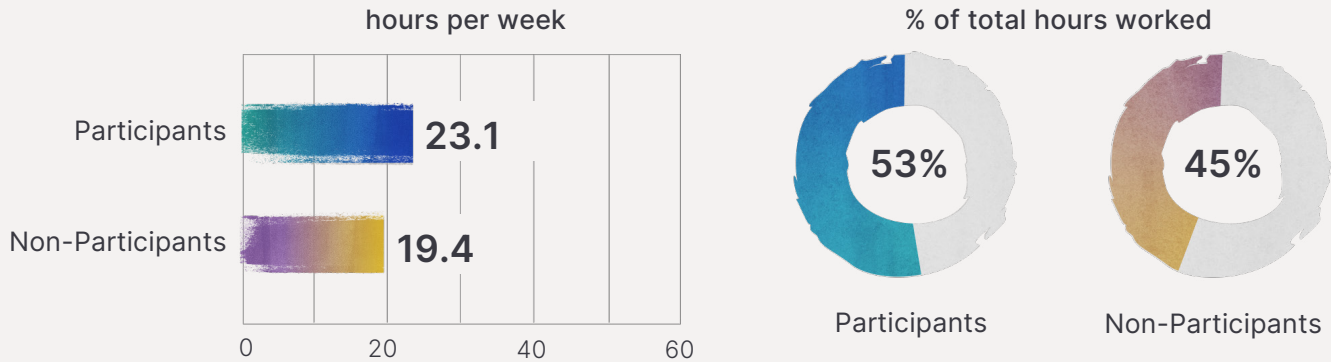
In 2022, Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) launched its Guaranteed Income (GI) for Artists Program. This program provided 2,400 artists across New York State with \$1,000 a month for 18 months. Built on the principle that all artists deserve financial security, the GI program ensured artists could use 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.

In this research brief, we provide a summary assessment of the impact of the GI program on artists' artistic and cultural practice based on surveys and interviews.¹ We describe how participants' work has changed and the effect the program had on their overall artistic and cultural career development. We found that the GI program showed promising impacts on the stability, productivity, and career development of artists across New York State. By alleviating financial pressures, the program empowered artists to dedicate more time to their craft, explore new creative avenues, and plan for a sustainable future in the arts.

1. See *Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study: Introduction* for a detailed description of all research methods and data sources.

FIGURE 4.1

Weekly hours spent on arts practice (last month)



Key Findings

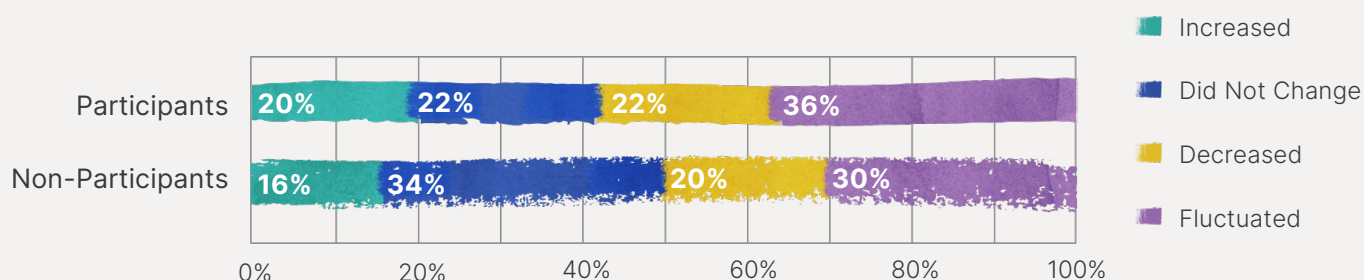
GI participants spent more time working on their artistic and cultural practice.

The data highlight notable differences in arts and cultural work (paid or unpaid) that can be attributed to receiving a guaranteed income. Participants who received the GI payments worked an average of 23.1 hours per week in the arts, compared to 19.4 hours for artists not in the program. This suggests that a guaranteed income allows individuals to dedicate more time to their artistic and cultural practice, potentially reducing the need to seek additional non-arts employment. The increase in weekly hours emphasizes the positive impact that financial stability can have on allowing artists to focus on their arts and creative practice.

Furthermore, the percentage of total work hours devoted to the arts was also higher among participants with a guaranteed income, at 53%, compared to 45% for non-participants. This indicates that financial support enabled artists to prioritize their time in arts and cultural work. Artists notoriously and commonly must balance many different jobs, often leaving them unable to fully commit to their artistic work (see **Brief #5 Juggling Responsibilities** for more on artists' juggling acts). Thanks to the GI program, artists receiving the funds worked over half their total hours on their artistic and cultural practice. As one participating artist told us, *"I'm a lot more consistent now with my art practice... before, it was sporadic due to time constraints, but now I'm maintaining a regular schedule that feels much more productive."*

FIGURE 4.2

12-month trend in earnings from artistic work



April showers bring May flowers by ChrisSoFly*

GI afforded artists the freedom to invest more in arts work, with the risks and fluctuations that entails.

Artists receiving a guaranteed income reported being better off in terms of their earnings from artistic work. Among GI participants, 20% reported an increase in their earnings compared to only 16% among non-participants. In contrast, artists who received a guaranteed income showed a higher rate of decrease in earnings (22%) than artists not in the program (20%). Artists in the GI program also showed higher rates of fluctuation in earnings (36%), compared to non-participants (30%) [See Figure 4.2].





These findings highlight that even with a guaranteed income, income variability can remain a factor for many artists. As one participating artist testified, *“There are good months, where I get a few thousand, and then slow ones... the income isn’t steady, but it has been better over time.”* Nonetheless, GI participants did not report greater earnings across all three types of work – arts, arts-related, and non-arts work. Total earnings were largely unchanged.

GI payments led to strong improvements in arts career development, including more experimentation, improvements in quality, and more impactful art work.

The data show that artists receiving a guaranteed income were more likely to engage in experimentation within their artistic practice, with 72% reporting they tried new media, techniques, or other forms of creative exploration in the past month.

FIGURE 4.3

Have you undertaken any experimentation in your artistic practice in the last month?

Participants	Non-Participants
 72%	 65%
 28%	 35%

In contrast, 65% of artists not in the program undertook similar experimentation. This suggests that financial security through a guaranteed income empowered artists to take creative risks and explore new approaches, as they could do so without the immediate pressure of financial constraints. As one participating artist put it, *“Having guaranteed income gave me that stability and allowed me to try new things in my music... I could invest time in experimenting with sound without the pressure of it needing to be commercially successful.”*

GI participants were also more likely to report being satisfied with the development of their art, the quality of their art work, and the impact of their art work. GI participants were also more likely to do community-based work during the program than non-participants (see **Brief #7 Community and Family Impacts** for more on community impacts of the GI payments). These outcomes indicate that GI support may contribute significantly to artistic growth and outreach, helping recipients feel more supported and fulfilled in their creative work.

FIGURE 4.4

How satisfied are you with this aspect of your artistic and/or cultural practice(s)?

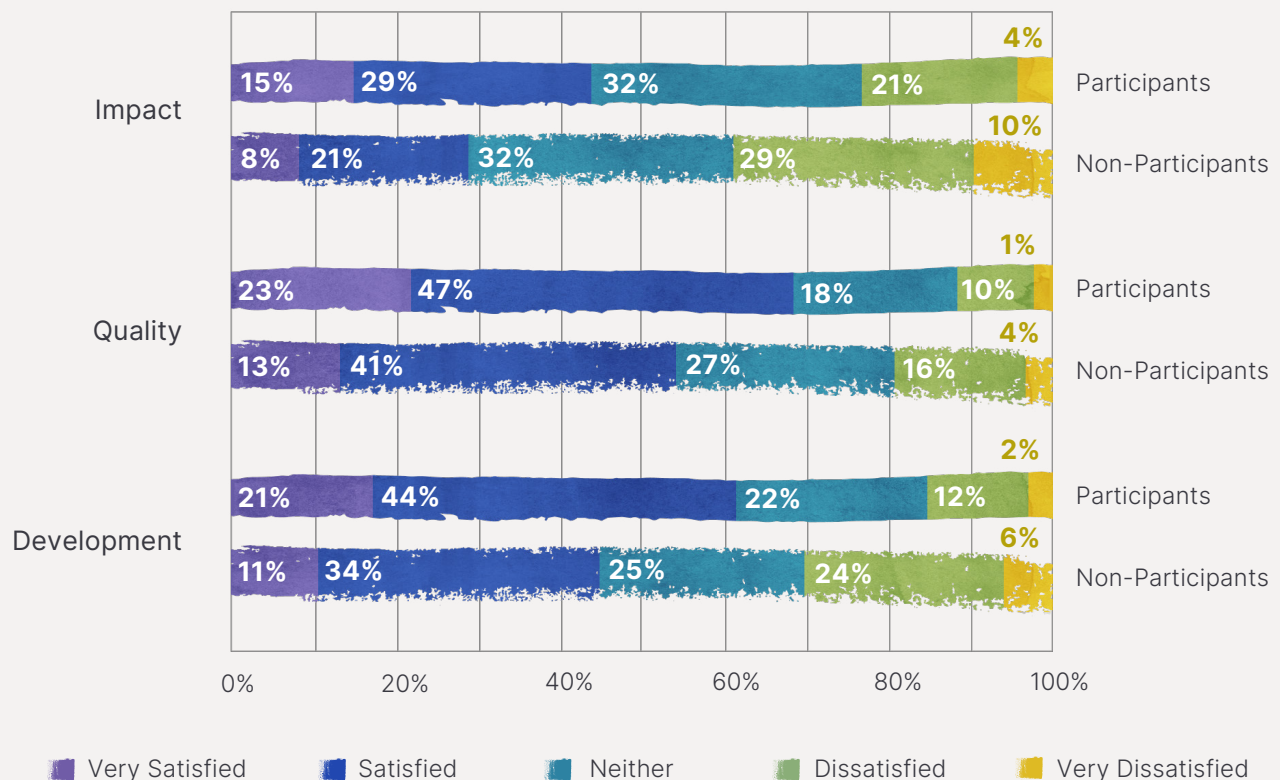


FIGURE 4.5

How would you describe the amount of energy you have to engage in your artistic or cultural practice(s)?

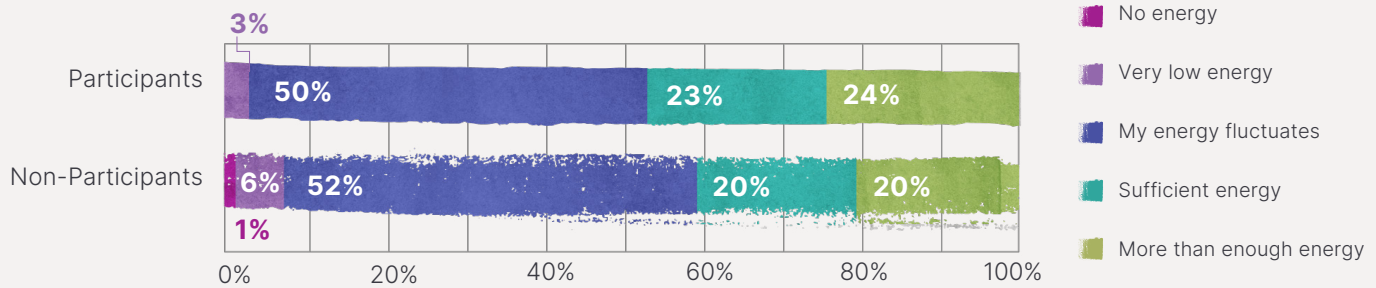
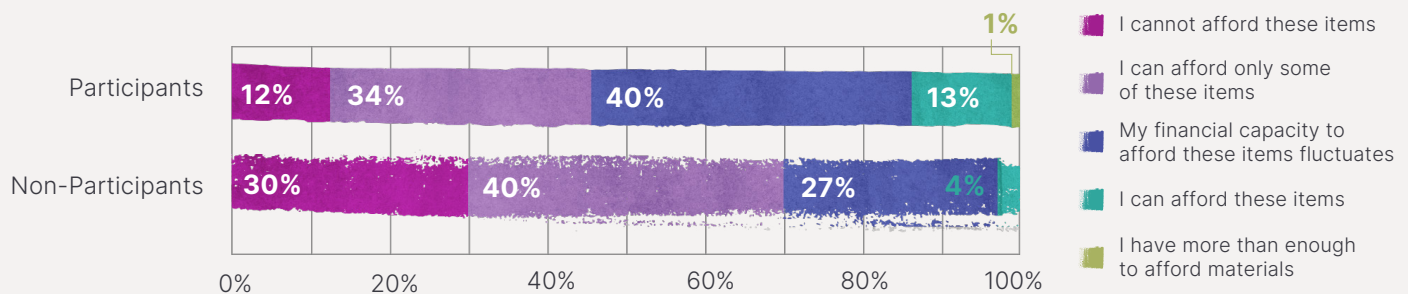


FIGURE 4.6

How would you describe your financial capacity to afford to engage in your artistic or cultural practice(s)?

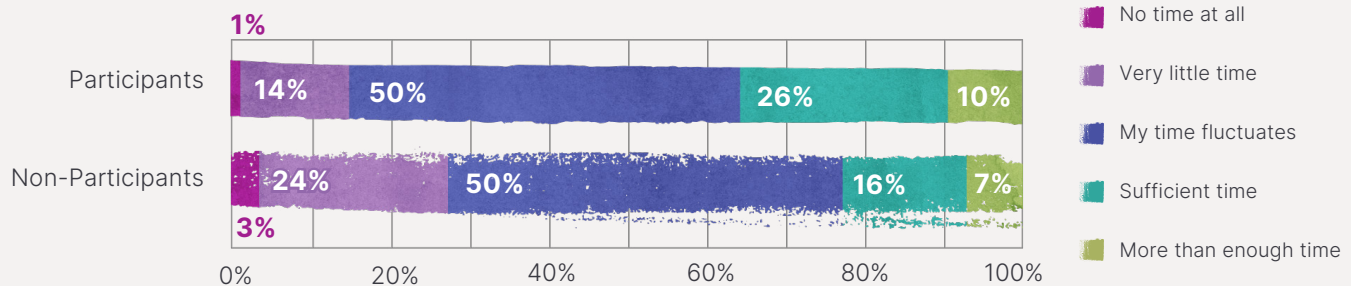


Participating artists had more time, finances, and energy to undertake artistic work.

GI payments greatly improved artists' ability to work as artists, as well as the likelihood of artists earning all of their income from arts work. Artists in the program had more energy and more time for their artistic practice. They were also better able to afford making a living in their artistic practice. As one participating artist captured it, *"This opportunity allowed me to spend more time on my creative work, developing new ideas and actually having the energy to explore them, instead of rushing through projects to pay the bills."* Among those who reported insufficient time for their arts work, participants in the program were less likely to give the following as reasons for the time crunch: unavailability of work, insufficient income from art, a lack of studio/facilities, and a lack of supplies/materials.

FIGURE 4.7

How would you describe the amount of time you have to engage in your artistic or cultural practice(s)?



They were more likely to cite care responsibilities as their main reason for having insufficient time for their craft (see *Brief #1 Artists' Demographics* to learn more about artists as caregivers, and *Brief #5 Juggling Responsibilities* for the limiting factors for spending time on artistic work). Lack of income from arts work was clearly the top factor holding back artists from engaging in more arts work.

Artists who received GI payments were more likely to say they would continue being an artist.

The odds of GI participants reporting that they would remain working as an artist in five years were 4.5 times greater compared to artists not participating in the program. This difference indicates that the financial insecurity associated with being an artist affects one's likelihood of remaining in the field, and that a more robust safety net could encourage more individuals to pursue and sustain careers in the arts.



Scan the QR code to listen to
"Waiting" by 3ee.*