



DataBrief provides arts educators and arts policy makers with highlights of SNAAP data and insights into the value of arts-school education. Contact us for more information.

## Spotlight on Job Satisfaction of Freelancers versus Traditional Employees

This DataBrief draws on the responses of over 92,000 arts alumni from 153 institutions in the United States who responded to the SNAAP survey in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

In what ways are self-employed, independent contractor, and freelance workers more or less satisfied with their jobs when compared to traditional employees?

### Prevalence of Freelancing

We know from previous SNAAP reports that arts graduates are generally very satisfied with the job in which they spend most of their time - whether they work in the arts or not. Also, according to SNAAP data, almost half (45%) of arts alumni report being currently self-employed, freelancing, or an independent contractor, and 75% of respondents have ever worked in one of these positions.

- Currently freelancing: 45% of all respondents
- Have ever freelanced: 75% of all respondents

Since non-traditional work arrangements are so prevalent among arts graduates and have been on the rise across the economy in recent decades, in this DataBrief we compare how these workers compare to traditional employees on various job satisfaction measures.

## Job Satisfaction: Creativity versus Security?

Arts alumni were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the job in which they spend the majority of their work time, such as job security, opportunity to be creative, and income. In order to focus on alumni who spend the majority of their time in a freelance position, the analysis below only looks at those alumni with one job. Also, we should note that both groups include part-time workers, and some traditional employees might be temporary.

On half of the measures, traditional and freelance workers rated their job satisfaction similarly. However, as Table 1 shows, the two groups differ considerably on four measures.

Aspects of job satisfaction	Freelancers/Independent contractors/Self-employed	Traditional employees	Percentage difference
Opportunity to be creative	86%	77%	9
Work that reflects my personality, interests, and values	86%	79%	7
Overall job satisfaction	88%	85%	3
Balance between work and non-work life	79%	76%	3
Opportunity to contribute to greater good	80%	79%	1
Opportunity for career advancement	71%	71%	0
Income	62%	71%	-9
Job security	70%	87%	-17

Table 1. Percentage of alumni currently employed in one job who indicated they are "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with identified aspects of their current work, by whether they indicated they were traditional employees or freelancers / independent contractor / self-employed workers.

Although most workers report being satisfied with their opportunity to be creative, the table shows to what extent freelance workers are especially satisfied in this regard. These non-traditional employees are also more likely to indicate that their work reflects their personality, interests, and values. Such results suggest non-traditional employees are well positioned to navigate the job market and find or create opportunities for work that match their self-expressive preferences.

Conversely, traditional employees are much more satisfied with their income and job security. Put differently, freelancers might be sacrificing some forms of comfort for non-monetary rewards. These results are consistent with David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker's research on creative workers, which refers to the experiences of such workers as "[a very complicated version of freedom](#)". Non-traditional workers, who lack the security and stable income of traditional employment, might experience more stress and uncertainty regarding where their career will bring them next.

## SNAAP News

Registration for 2015 has closed with about 70 institutions signing up for either SNAAP or SNAAP+. We welcome many first-time participants as well as a number of institutions that have elected to continue learning from their arts alumni. The 2015 SNAAP survey will be fielded in October and November.



[Forward to a friend](#)



Indiana University School of Education  
Center for Postsecondary Research  
1900 E. Tenth Street | Bloomington, IN 47406-7512

[Subscribe me.](#)

[Unsubscribe me.](#)