



USITT Releases First Demographic Study of Live Entertainment Technology and Design Workforce

**Establishes Definitive Baseline for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Goals Across Industry
Finds COVID-19 Impacted Nearly Three-Quarters of Respondents**

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(LIVERPOOL, N.Y. — Sept. 15, 2021) — The United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) today released the findings of a sweeping national study to better understand the demographic makeup of the technical theatre workforce. This is the first study of its kind to take an in-depth look at who is working in the entertainment design and technology industry.

The **2021 Entertainment Design & Technology Workforce Demographics Study** (WDS) was conducted by SMU DataArts, a research organization that has been collecting workforce demographic data for more than a decade.

“USITT and many of our partner organizations along with corporations, universities, and producing entities across the country have a stated goal of creating and sustaining a more diverse and inclusive workforce,” noted USITT Executive Director David Grindle. “But while we have found many studies that look at demographics of performers and art support organizations, we could not find any that focused solely on the workforce in design, technology, and management.

“We felt that USITT should fill that void,” Grindle said, “and establish a baseline from which our industry can measure the effectiveness of equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.”

Discussions on beginning this study began in 2019, but the study was delayed a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The context in which the WDS was implemented captures the reality of the impact of the pandemic on the performing arts sector. Four questions were added to the survey instrument to better understand the effects of the pandemic on current employment and opportunities to be employed in the performing arts.

Overall, 74 percent of respondents indicated that since March 2020, COVID-19 has affected their employment situation. Among survey respondents, 28 percent were not currently employed at the time of the survey and did not have employment lined up for 2021. Among those not currently employed, 75 percent planned on returning to work in the technical theatre industry.

“Our partner in this study, SMU DataArts, is well known in the non-profit sector for their rigorous commitment to statistically valid surveys producing results that can be used to gauge progress,” said USITT President Carolyn Satter. “That ability to create a replicable survey instrument that could show change was extremely important to the USITT Board of Directors who chose SMU DataArts for this expertise and for their commitment to and understanding of the arts. We are grateful to have this important data to measure the changes in our industry in the future.”

USITT has pledged to repeat the study in five years to measure diversification trends in the industry workforce.

Some key findings of the 2021 WDS include:

- People of color account for only 13 percent of staff at participating technical theatre organizations, compared to 40 percent in the national workforce.
- Only 2 percent of respondents selected “Hispanic/Latino(a)” while this segment is represented in the national population at 18 percent. Also, only 2 percent selected Black and 2 percent selected Asian, representing 12 percent and 6 percent of the overall population, respectively.
- Younger respondents tended to be more racially diverse with 17 percent of those in the 15-34 age range identifying as a person of color or multi-racial, compared to 14 percent of those in the 35-49 age range and 7 percent of those 65 and older.
- Younger respondents also experienced the largest gap between being employed in March 2020 and being employed during the survey period (Spring 2021), with more not yet finding employment in 2021.
- A significant portion, 31 percent of survey respondents, identified as LGBTQ+. This is more than three times the baseline rate from the U.S. Census Household Pulse report, which pegs the overall U.S. population at 10 percent identifying as LGBTQ+. Eleven percent of respondents chose to identify their sexual orientation in a way that was not in the survey.
- Respondents self-identified as 51 percent male, 43 percent female, and 5 percent genderqueer/gender non-conforming. Three percent of the surveyed individuals identified as transgender.
- Of respondents, 22 percent identified as a person with a disability. This can be compared with CDC results that found 26 percent of all U.S. adults have some form of disability.

- Overall, respondents were most likely to have a salary of \$50,000 to \$74,999. Roles in the theatre business professional category had a higher median salary range of \$75,000 to \$99,999.
- In all roles, except General and Artistic Management, male respondents reported higher median salaries than did female respondents in the same role.
- In all surveyed industry segments, with one exception, the predominant self-identified gender was male. Only in Costume/Wig and Makeup Design and Technology did another self-identification predominate, where 83 percent identified as female.

The entire 2021 Entertainment Design & Technology Workforce Demographics Study can be downloaded at www.usitt.org/wds. Over the course of the next several months, USITT will be delving into key sections of the WDS and releasing detailed findings on industry segments, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and salary as an ongoing exploration of this important benchmark in the live entertainment industry.

Conducting research in and investigating the field of live entertainment was the foundation upon which USITT was founded in 1960, notes Satter, the USITT president. “Our members are investing in this and other important research with their member dollars and donations to the Institute. We hope that this study lays the foundation for a brighter, more diverse, and equal industry for us all.”

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Methodology and Data Privacy

SMU DataArts developed the core workforce demographics survey instrument over the course of nine years through extensive piloting and feedback from multiple communities across the country. This USITT survey instrument collected self-reported demographic data from individuals who were given the option to choose “I decline to state” if they preferred not to respond to a question. It surveyed five demographic characteristics: heritage (race, ethnicity, national origin), age, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Additionally, it collected data specific to the interests of USITT regarding employment status, income, and likelihood of recommending a career in the technical theatre field. The WDS was conducted from April 1 to June 5, 2021. SMU DataArts received more than 4,000 responses.

Responses were captured directed by SMU DataArts and data were not transmitted to USITT. Data were stored in a secure, third-party survey data system accessible only to SMU DataArts. The study did not collect any personally identifying information, such as name, postal address, or email address. Data analysis was conducted by SMU DataArts’ in-house research staff, which has successfully collected and protected data since its establishment in 2004.

About USITT

The United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Inc. (USITT) was founded in 1960 to promote a vibrant dialogue, research and learning among practitioners, educators and students of theatre design and technology. Today, the Institute has grown to include thousands of

members at all levels of their careers and has continually evolved to embrace new technologies being used in entertainment production. USITT is now the leader of lifelong learning opportunities for the entertainment design and technology industry.

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