

Chicago's creative economy in comparative perspective

Based on research from



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Highlights:

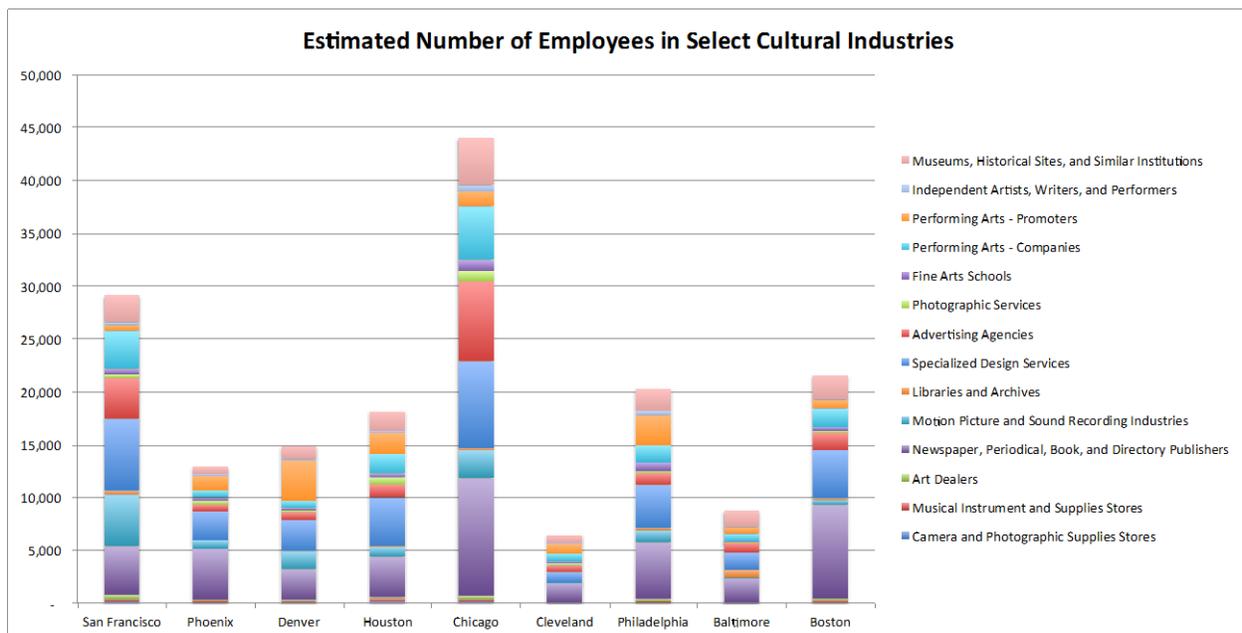
- ❖ *Almost 21 percent of Chicago's civilian labor force is made up of creative workers*
- ❖ *Chicago's artist labor force comprises a portion of the city's labor force 1.6 times the US average*
- ❖ *Chicago is home to relatively high concentrations of writers/authors and architects*

Cities now look to their creative economy as a potential engine of economic and social development. There are two key ways to measure the extent and vitality of the creative economy: by the number of people employed in specified creative or cultural industries and, alternatively, by the number of people who use creative skills in a wide range of occupations, across many industries.

Here, we use both to investigate Chicago's creative workers in comparison to a group of U.S. peer cities that share characteristics of relative population size and composition and that represent broad geographic spread: San Francisco, Phoenix, Denver, Houston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston.

Select Cultural Industries

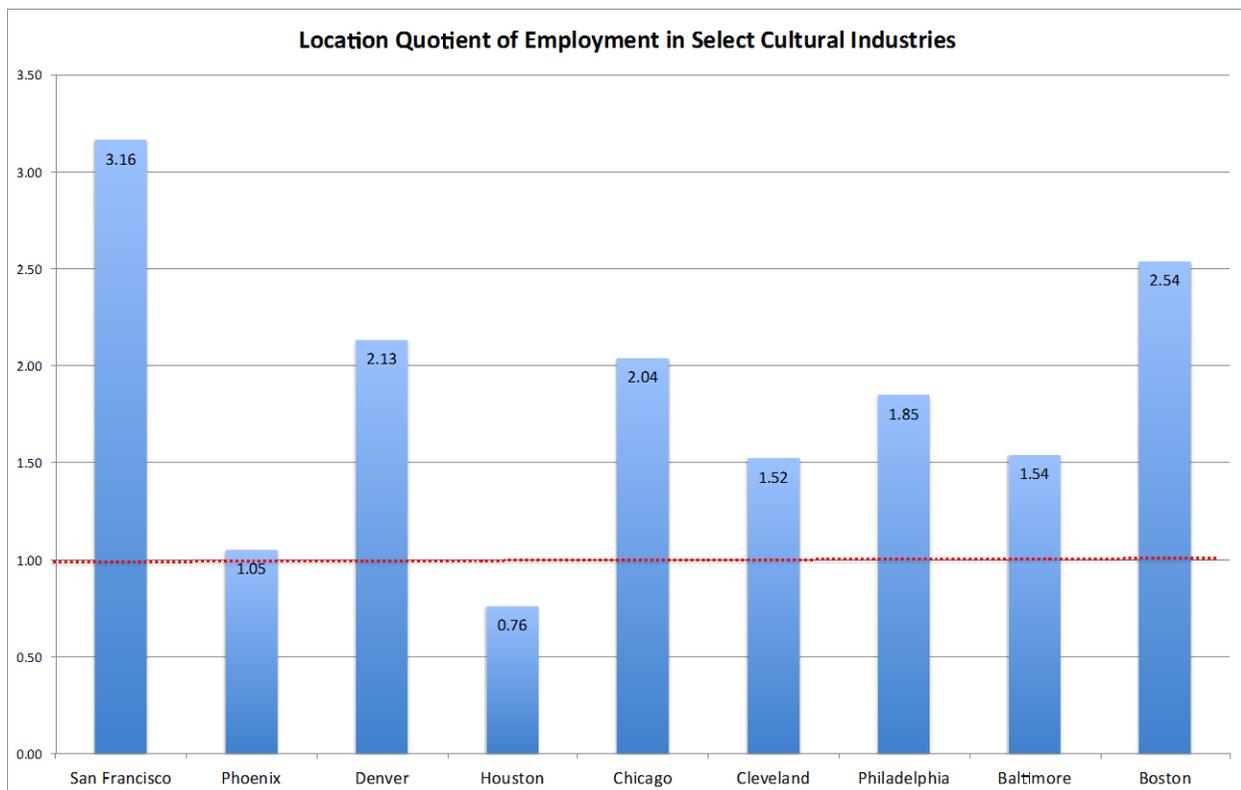
To develop indicators of the size of the cultural industries, measured by the number of employees, we use a select set of industries that have been commonly used in studies of creative or cultural industries (these terms that are often used interchangeably in the literature, but “cultural industries” tends to be broader, encompassing museums, historical sites, etc.). We focus here on what could be considered a “core” set of cultural industries around which there is some consensus, and we include all reported employment within these industries. Examples of such core industries, as listed in the graph below, include advertising agencies, performing arts companies, and motion picture and sound recording industries.



Using the 2007 Economic Census, we find that 44,029 people are employed in these select Chicago-based cultural industries. Of those, the largest portion (25 percent) is employed in periodical, book and other forms of publishing.

Chicago in Comparative Perspective

For comparative purposes, it is also helpful to know how a city ranks in terms of its total number of employees in cultural industries relative to the national average. The location quotient measures the portion of employment in select cultural industries in each city relative to the portion of employment in the same select cultural industries in the US as whole. Any city above 1.0 exceeds the national average and shows a concentration of employment in these cultural industries at the city level.

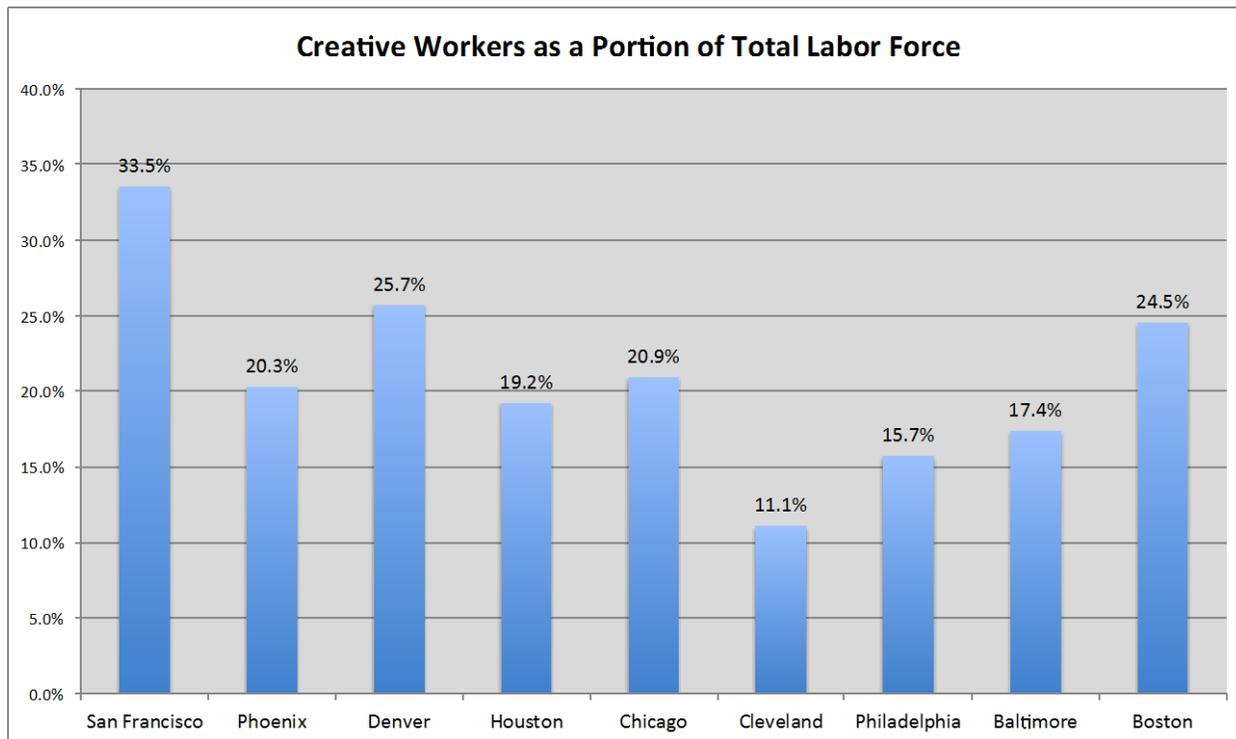


Because the measurement for cultural industries includes all employees in those industries (e.g. service and auxiliary staff), most analysts prefer the alternative approach: measuring the number of people employed in occupations that require creativity—that is creative workers.

Chicago's Creative Workers¹

Approximately, 21 percent of Chicago's civilian labor force is comprised of creative workers, on par with the US national average. Chicago represents the median among the peer cities in terms of the proportion of select creative workers in its labor force. San Francisco, Denver, and Boston have the highest proportion of creative workers; Phoenix, Houston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Cleveland have lower proportions than the national average. Research conducted by the USDA Economic Research Service² underpins the selection of creative workers used, which includes engineers, computer programmers, and artists.

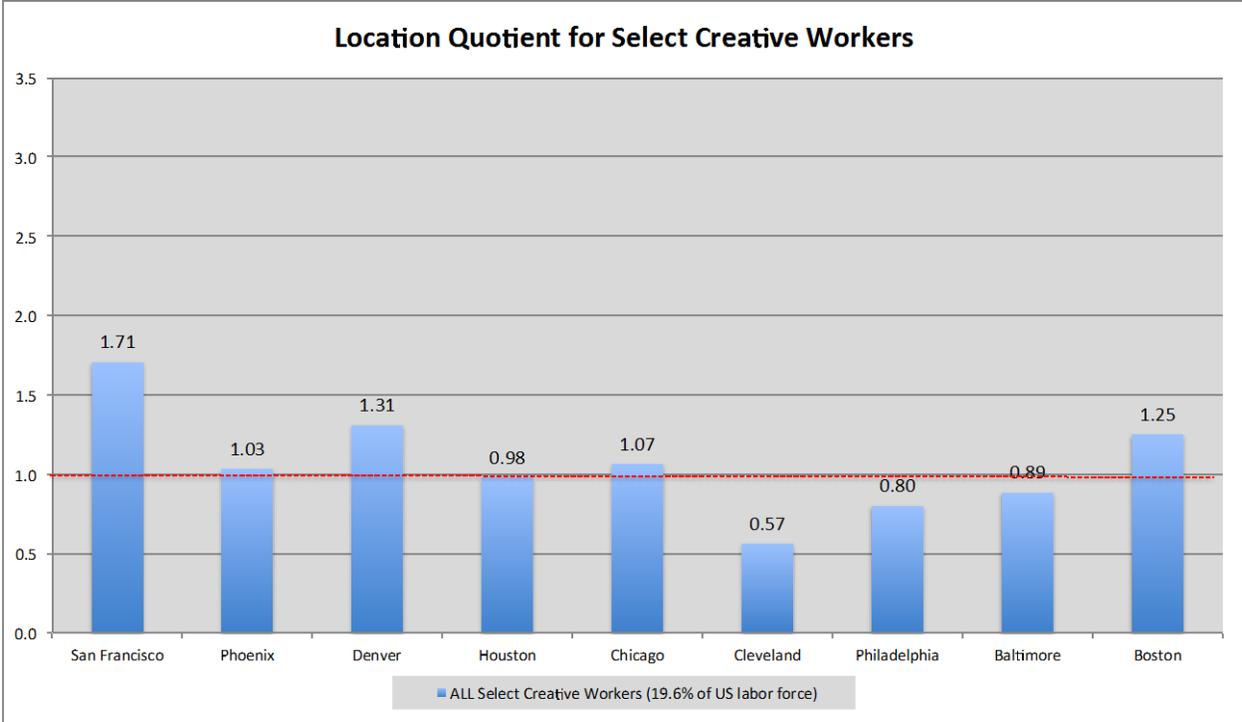
Creative Workers as a Portion of Total Labor Force



¹ Source data: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey, EEO-ALL01R and 2006-2010 ACS estimates of civilian labor force

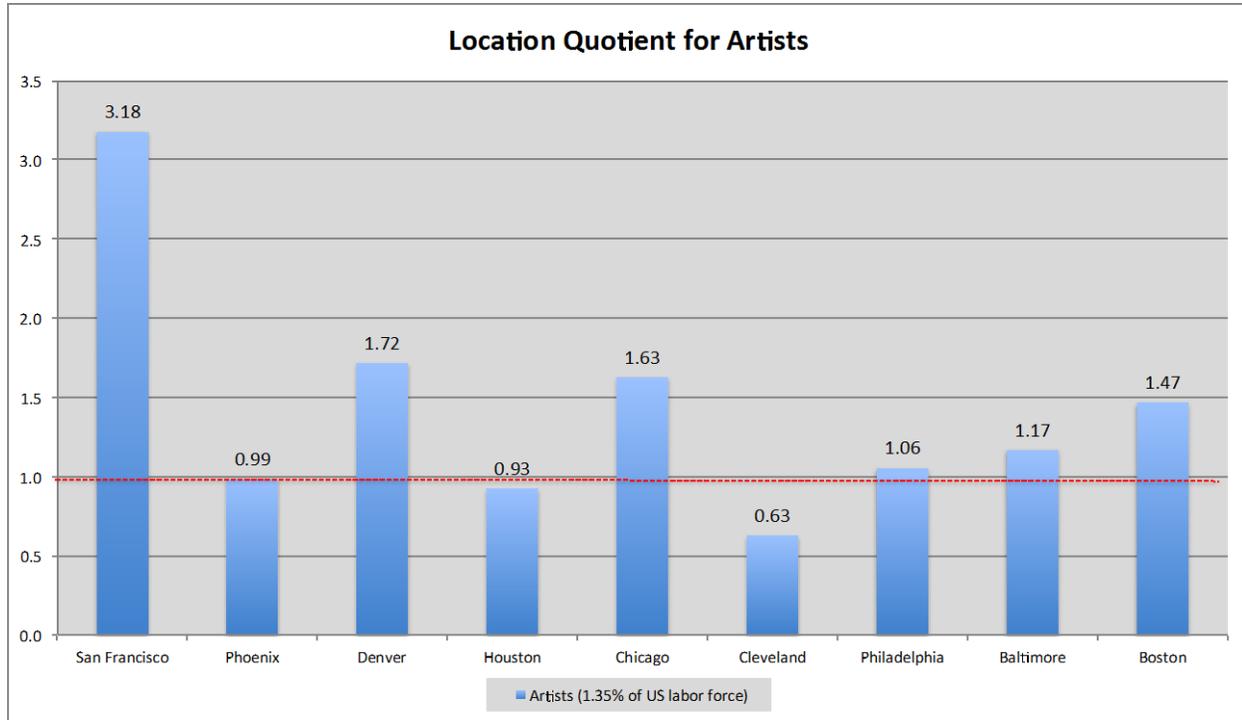
² <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/creative-class-county-codes/documentation.aspx#.Ufknh1PGyr->

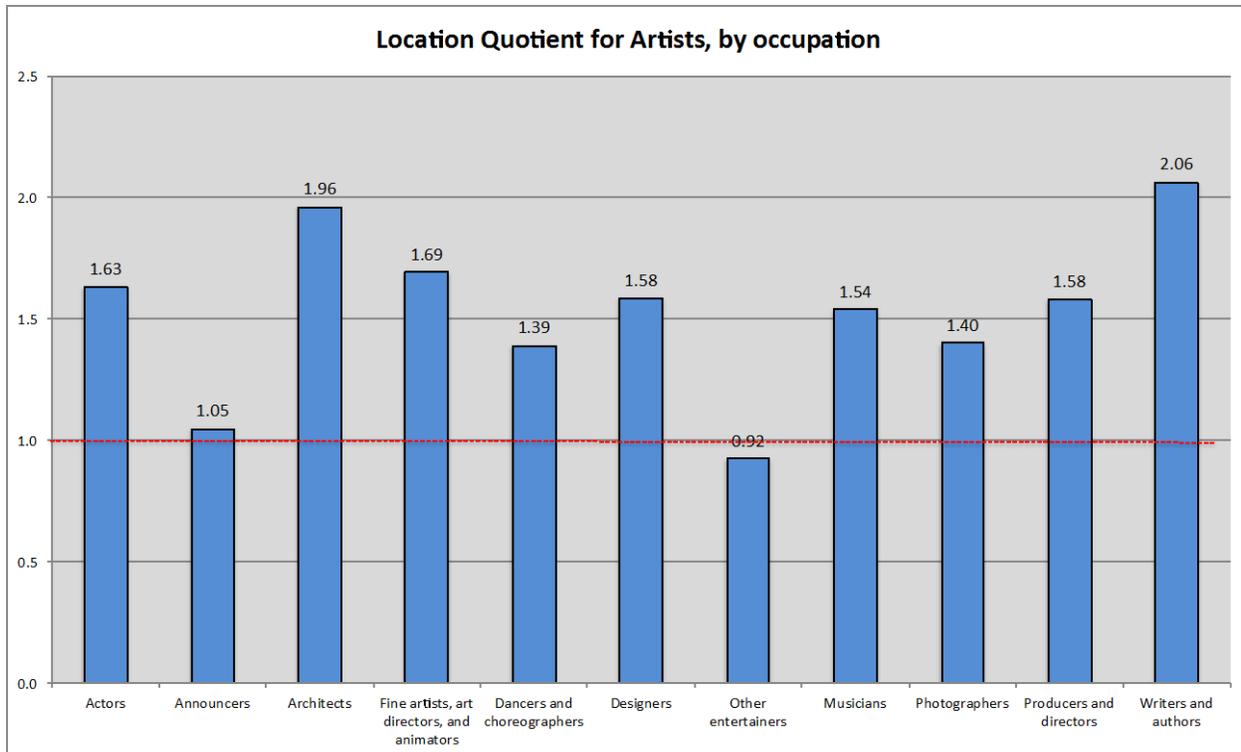
In the graph below, the location quotient compares the portion of creative workers in each city's labor force to the portion of creative workers in the total US labor force. The greater the location quotient is above 1.0, the greater the concentration of creative workers within the city's labor force.



Artists as Portion of Civilian Labor Force

Across studies of the creative economy, there is wide consensus that artists are vital creative workers. We therefore give special attention to artists as a core group of workers in the creative economy. The National Endowment for the Arts has identified eleven occupations as constituting the artist labor force: actors, announcers, architects, fine artists/art directors/ animators, dancers/choreographers, designers, other entertainers, musicians, photographers, producers/directors, and writers/authors. Artists make up 2.2 percent of Chicago's labor force, 1.6 times the portion of artists in the national workforce (1.35 percent).





Chicago is home to relatively high concentrations of writers/authors and architects, with moderate concentrations of fine artists/art directors/animators and actors.

Chefs & Head Cooks as Portion of Total Labor Force

There is no standard definition for which occupations or industries are to be counted and analyzed as creative or cultural. Although there is widespread consensus that performing arts companies and motion picture/sound recording industries would routinely be included in any measure, other occupational categories are more variable. For example, the city of Chicago identifies the culinary arts as a key component of its own creative industries. The concentration of chefs and head cooks is one indicator of the importance of this industry. Currently, five peer cities in the sample have a higher concentration of chefs/head cooks than Chicago.

