

STATE OF

PHOTOGRAPHY

2022

BY
TARA PIXLEY
MARTIN SMITH-RODDEN
DAVID CAMPBELL
ADRIAN HADLAND

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Image by Kai Elmer / Felix Uribe / CatchLight. Felix Uribe, CatchLight Local Fellow, documenting the scenes and citizens in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, as part of the CatchLight Local Visual Desk, a new collaborative model for visual journalism looking to increase community representation as well as as well as the number of staff visual journalists in local news.

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REPORT STATS

1,325
Participants

87

Countries

49%

Female

46%

Male

1.9%

Nonbinary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THIS REPORT REPRESENTS THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL STUDY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS THAT SPECIFICALLY LOOKS TO UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCES OF IMAGEMAKERS FROM HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN GREATER DEPTH.

While previous studies have done much to reveal how employment practices, ethical challenges and risk have shaped the dynamics of the visual journalism industry, the research team for this State of Photography 2022 study have sought to understand how socioeconomic backgrounds, race/ethnicity, gender, disability and nationality might impact access to a photography career and/or to achieving success within it.

The 2022 study engaged 1,325 people from at least 87 countries and was open to photographers of all kinds (not only photojournalists as was the case with the State of News Photography Reports of 2015–2018). With previous studies resulting in largely male-focused data, it felt important to reach out to professional organizations representing a much wider range of communities within the industry. Of the photographers who participated in the survey, 49.46% identified as female, 46.23% as male and 1.97% as nonbinary or gender nonconforming, while transgender and two-spirit identities represented 0.45% and 0.36% respectively.*

To extend the sample further, the survey was also made available not only in English but also in Spanish, French, Chinese and Korean. While the majority of respondents were U.S.-born, about 40% were photographers from nations traditionally referred to as “non-Western”.

The resulting data, drawn from a uniquely diverse sample of photographers, reveals a far more nuanced understanding of how developments within the industry, but also in the world at large (not least, COVID-19), have impacted photographers across the globe.

* 0.90% responded as “Prefer not to say,” and 0.63 Self-described to a non-listed category.

HERE ARE SOME KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2022 STATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY STUDY:



ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE (THROUGH INSURANCE) WAS NOTABLY UNEVEN WHEN ANALYZED BY RACE WITH, FOR INSTANCE, ONLY 15% OF WHITE PHOTOGRAPHERS REPORTING THEY DID NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE COMPARED TO 42% OF ASIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO DID NOT, AND 41% OF BLACK PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO ALSO DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE.

1. The **financial insecurity** already evident within the visual media sector has been considerably exacerbated by COVID-19. Photographers have been hit hard financially by COVID-19 with the impact of the pandemic particularly detrimental to women and non-binary photographers.
2. Close to a third of female respondents reported a **significant loss of income**, in some cases threatening their continued participation in the sector.
3. **Access to healthcare** (through insurance) was notably uneven when analyzed by race with, for instance, only 15% of white photographers reporting they did not have health insurance compared to 42% of Asian photographers who did not, and 41% of Black photographers who also did not have access to health insurance.
4. The pandemic appears to have even further distorted the **distribution of work** according to race, with white and multiracial photographers more likely to get work during COVID-19 than photographers from other racial or ethnic backgrounds.
5. Race was again a key factor in **annual income** for photographers, with respondents of color significantly more likely to earn less than a person who did not identify as a person of color.
6. The pandemic has also impacted **personal debt levels** of photographers, with more than half of the respondents indicating they were now carrying a “great deal” to a “moderate” amount of debt.
7. **Housing costs** were also frequently subject to racial imbalances with both Black/African American as well as Latina/o respondents indicating significantly greater concern about their ability to pay for housing compared to white respondents.
8. Only half the respondents **work full time as photographers**, with many reporting they carried out a wide range of work, some related to photography and some unrelated, to earn a living.



NEARLY HALF OF THE RESPONDENTS HAVE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES AND A QUARTER HAVE POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS.

9. When it comes to **actual earnings**, around half of the respondents (50.2%) earned less than \$40,000 USD a year (after tax) while just under 30% earned less than \$20,000 USD per year.
10. The data also indicated a clear deficit in **earnings for marginalized groups** (women, non-binary, and POC), with these photographers earning a median income of around \$20,000 - \$29,999, compared to those who were not in a marginalized population who had a median income of \$40,000 - \$49,999.
11. Those identifying as being from a Western nation showed their **median income** at \$40,000 - \$49,999, and those who did *not* identify as being from a Western nation showed median income at \$10,000 - \$19,999.
12. Most of the photographers who participated in this survey **have been in the business** for more than five years (80%) with more than a quarter having worked in photography for more than 20 years.
13. Nearly half of the respondents have **undergraduate degrees** and a quarter have postgraduate qualifications.
14. Male photographer respondents were more likely to say that they "*consistently win photo awards*," (60.4%) than women (39.6%) and non-binary photographers (0%). Among those who indicated they have received grants, women were more likely to report this **type of recognition** (59.0%) than did men (37.4%). Photographers of color, non-binary photographers and photographers with a disability were significantly under-represented among those who indicated they received recognition through awards (23.9%) when compared with those not in those groups (76.1%).
15. Photographers who identified as POC, women, and/or non-binary were significantly more likely to **seek membership in professional organizations** and associations than those who did not identify as coming from any of those marginalized groups.
16. In terms of perceptions of problems in the field, there was robust (averaging 78.6%) agreement among those responding that sexism, socioeconomic disparity (77.59%), and structural racism (75.12%) were all **issues present in the photo industry**.



PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO IDENTIFIED AS A MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY WERE DISPROPORTIONATELY MORE LIKELY TO INDICATE THAT THEY WERE “NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT” THEY HAD RECEIVED APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

17. Risk is something that respondents generally accept in their work. More than 88% said they **sometimes, almost always, or always accept risk**. Only 8% said they never or rarely took a risk. When asked about the types of risk photographers faced, 38% cited health and psychological risks, 27% named abuse from law enforcement or detention, and nearly 20% said assault. Armed conflict (9%) was the least cited risk.
18. More than three-quarters of respondents noted **health and psychological risks**, declaring that mental health and wellness was at least occasionally an issue (with nearly one-quarter saying it was usually or always an issue).
19. Photographers who identified as female and/or POC, gender-nonconforming, non-binary, transgender and/or people with a disability were disproportionately more likely to indicate that they were “not at all confident” they had received **appropriate training and equipment** to do their job safely during the pandemic.
20. **The top five roles and responsibilities photographers identified as integral to their work were:**
 - Be accurate and truthful in visual storytelling - 29%
 - Tell compelling and impactful stories - 18%
 - Consider how particular images or telling certain stories visually might negatively impact those photographed - 17%
 - Illuminate social problems to a broad audience - 14%
 - Advocate for human or civil rights and effect change - 8%

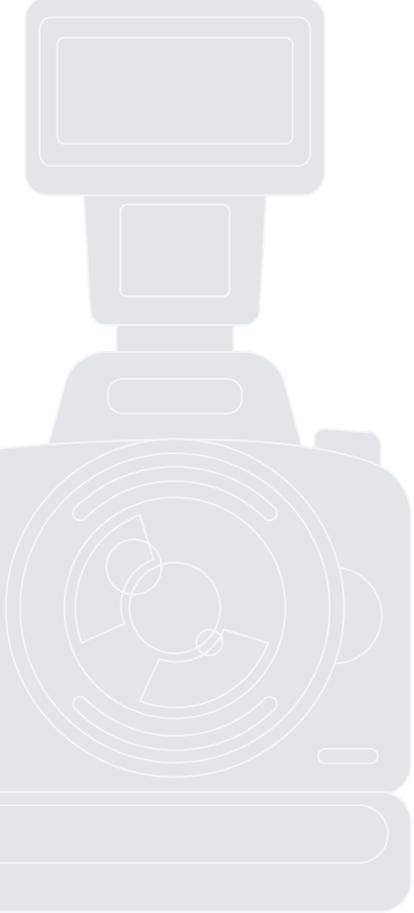


INTRODUCTION

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE FINDINGS OF THE STATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY 2022 SURVEY PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH CATCHLIGHT AND THE KNIGHT FOUNDATION. THE SURVEY EXPANDS ON THE [VISUAL STORYTELLER FIELD SURVEY](#), A 2020 PROJECT UNDERTAKEN BY TARA PIXLEY AND MARTIN SMITH-RODDEN DURING THE EARLY PHASE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW PHOTOGRAPHERS* WERE IMMEDIATELY IMPACTED BY THE GLOBAL CRISIS (PIXLEY & SMITH-RODDEN, 2020).

* For the purposes of this study, we opened up to all photographers (inclusive of commercial, sports, fine art, editorial, etc.) not just news and documentary photographers as was dictated by previous surveys having been tied to an international news photography award.

Image by Kai Elmer / Felix Uribe / CatchLight. Felix Uribe, CatchLight Local Fellow, documenting the scenes and citizens in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, as part of the CatchLight Local Visual Desk, a new collaborative model for visual journalism looking to increase community representation as well as as well as the number of staff visual journalists in local news.



The State of Photography 2022 also builds on the work of three previous groundbreaking State of News Photography reports produced by the World Press Photo Foundation. Although these surveys were completed by a particular constituency – entrants to the annual World Press Photo Contest – the data they provided drew attention to the fact that the news photo industry’s professional spaces were predominantly white, male and Western¹. These reports also illuminated the varied ways in which photographers around the world were struggling with “money, ethics, and work in the digital age” (Hadland, Campbell, and Lambert 2015).

The State of Photography 2022 sought a wide pool of respondents, and our survey was engaged by a global pool of 1,325 respondents from at least 87 countries who represent a multitude of photo organizations, collectives, and communities. The respondents ranged from 19 to 80 years of age, with the average being about 42 years old.

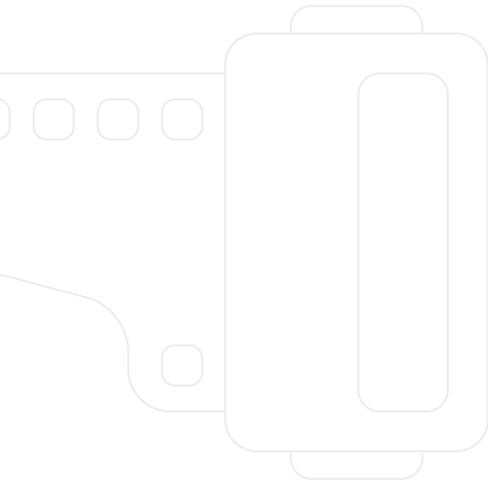
Our survey also sought to understand the experiences faced by photographers from historically marginalized communities² in greater depth. That goal required us to ask demographic questions around race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. The research team recognizes that these categories are socially constructed, always in flux, and radically shift from nation to nation. However, the majority of international editorial publications, awarding agencies, and funding organizations operate out of those nations deemed “Western,” and/or often implicitly subscribe to Western ideas of race and ethnicity. We had to look through that lens to effectively recognize the barriers and limitations placed on photographers working in, with, and around these organizations that set the current global standards of photography and often act as gatekeepers to the profession. We do this work, in part, to access the knowledge necessary to advocate for and build an industry beyond that limiting lens.

It was also important to the researchers of this study to understand how socioeconomic backgrounds, disability, and nationality might impact access to a photography career and/or to achieving success in the field. To that end, our 2022 survey added many new questions involving household

¹ There are many ways in which the world can be divided into cultural and geographic groupings. These include Global North versus Global South, majority world versus minority world, and Western versus non-Western. Each typology has limitations, but notwithstanding that, we have chosen in this report to use Western to signify countries that have deployed colonial relations of power over non-Western peoples, and countries that have been formed and shaped by colonial relations of power. In our analysis of this survey data, we understand Western countries to include the states of the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

² Our methodology for determining what survey respondents are from historically marginalized communities is outlined in detail in the Methodology section.

OUR SURVEY ALSO SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCES FACED BY PHOTOGRAPHERS FROM HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN GREATER DEPTH. THAT GOAL REQUIRED US TO ASK DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS AROUND RACE, ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY.



makeup of photographers, relationship to dependents, citizenship, and a variety of inquiries around professional activities, such as grants, awards, photo festivals, and exhibitions.

METHODOLOGY

Work on the State of Photography 2022 survey design occurred during regular Zoom meetings of the research team, starting in late July 2020, and hosted by the principal investigator, based out of Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, CA). With consult and draft reviews from partners at CatchLight, Women Photograph, Everyday Projects, and Authority Collective, survey development work by the research team continued through the piloting of the survey (December 18–21, 2020) to its full launch on December 21, 2020. Through the assistance of volunteer translators and the supplementary use of Google Translate software, the survey was made available in English, Spanish, French, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), and Korean. In the interest of maintaining a confidential and voluntary survey environment, most of the items were voluntary and non-forced-choice questions (i.e., respondents could choose to continue through the survey without responding to certain items). The survey was hosted on Qualtrics, a cloud-based subscription software platform for gathering survey data. Copies of the final questionnaire and raw data results are available upon request.

The survey engaged 1325* people from at least 87 countries via an anonymous link, made publicly available from December 21, 2020 to April 12, 2021 when the final response was logged and the survey and link were terminated. Initial respondents were approached by both email and posts in the social media of professional organizations (e.g., National Press Photographers Association, Women Photograph), who agreed to voluntarily share the URL to the online, anonymous questionnaire. Respondents indicated as being native to 87 countries, with the majority of those who disclosed location being United States-born ($n=611$, 46.1%; see sample details from all countries in Appendix, Table 1). About 60% ($n=801$) of respondents were from what might be termed “Western Nations”, with 39.5% ($n=524$) from “non-Western” nations.

During the data analysis, there were many opportunities to cross-reference various data points to investigate trends, patterns and correlations when possible. This helped the researchers paint a deeper picture of how certain people are impacted by industry standards and where exclusions might

be occurring. For example: as there was a special interest among the researchers in exploring themes of intersectionality in the profession, two variables were created for analysis that addressed the specific experiences of two distinctly defined marginalized populations among respondents. The first group, called Marginalized Group Category I, included the following categories of respondents: female-identified and/or people of color*, and/or people with a disability. A second group, Marginalized Group Category II, includes the following categories of respondents: people of color and/or people with a disability. We focused on these groups because they have historically received less attention in previous studies of the photography profession.

By connecting the survey to a multitude of identity-affirming photo organizations (such as Women Photograph, Authority Collective, Indigenous Photograph, etc.), this study is able to provide a snapshot of communities whose perspectives and experiences have been underreported in previous studies on the photography field. While we have deployed very robust statistical techniques to provide reliable data and interpretations, all surveys are shaped by the communities to which they are addressed and by those who respond. The data we present here is primarily a reflection of the survey's circulation and the respondents who engaged with the survey.

As a result, this survey is not necessarily an absolute reflection of the professional photographer population as a whole. This is especially important to consider when assessing the radical shift in gender and racial demographics from the World Press Photo Foundation (WPPF) surveys of contest entrants. In the 2015–2018 WPPF State of News Photography reports, women and non-white photographers were likely underrepresented relative to the actual makeup of the industry because respondents came from contest entrants, which inherently entails an additional level of self-selection into the contest submission pool. In contrast, our State of Photography 2022 study likely has respondents identifying as women being somewhat overrepresented relative to the general photo industry due to the survey's circulation among identity-focused photo organizations.

Nonetheless, this study, along with others of its kind, are vital additions to our understanding of the photography industry as a whole. They offer a robust snapshot of a profession that remains understudied even as visuals become an increasingly important component of the global media diet



FINANCIAL (IN)SECURITY AND INDUSTRY SUCCESS



WHILE PHOTOGRAPHY CAN STILL BE A LUCRATIVE AND RELIABLE PROFESSION FOR SOME, ECONOMIC PRECARITY HAS BECOME AN ALL-TOO COMMON FEATURE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE. HOWEVER, THE PRECARITY THAT WAS ALREADY EVIDENT ACROSS THE VISUAL MEDIA SECTOR PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY EXACERBATED BY THE STRAINS AND CHALLENGES THAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCE OF VARIOUS STRATEGIES TO COMBAT THE PANDEMIC.

Lockdowns, self-isolation and the cancelation of large, public events or gatherings have greatly reduced the available opportunities for photographic employment. Most people working in the visual media industry lost a substantial amount of work and money in the first year of the pandemic. This loss was estimated by our respondents to be in excess of \$2,500¹ for each photographer, but this negative impact was neither equal nor uniform.

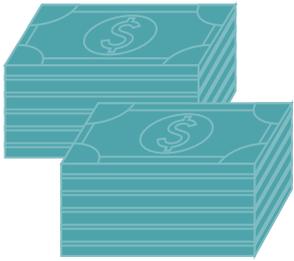
46%

OF FEMALE PHOTOGRAPHERS
WERE GRAPPLING WITH
REMAINING IN THE VISUAL
MEDIA INDUSTRY

The data from our study shows that the COVID-19 pandemic had a particularly detrimental impact on women and non-binary photographers, an increasing number of whom reported they are now looking to leave the industry largely on the basis of the financial stress they have experienced over the last two years. Indeed, almost half (46%) of the photographers surveyed in this study who identified as women² admitted they were grappling with the question of whether or not it was worthwhile financially for them to remain in the visual media industry.

¹ All references to money in this survey are in USD and indicate an after tax amount.

² The gender breakdown is further explained in the next section.



32%

OF WOMEN SAID THEY HAD LOST SUCH SIGNIFICANT INCOME DURING THE PANDEMIC THAT THIS MAY WELL BE SUFFICIENT TO PUSH THEM OUT OF THE SECTOR.

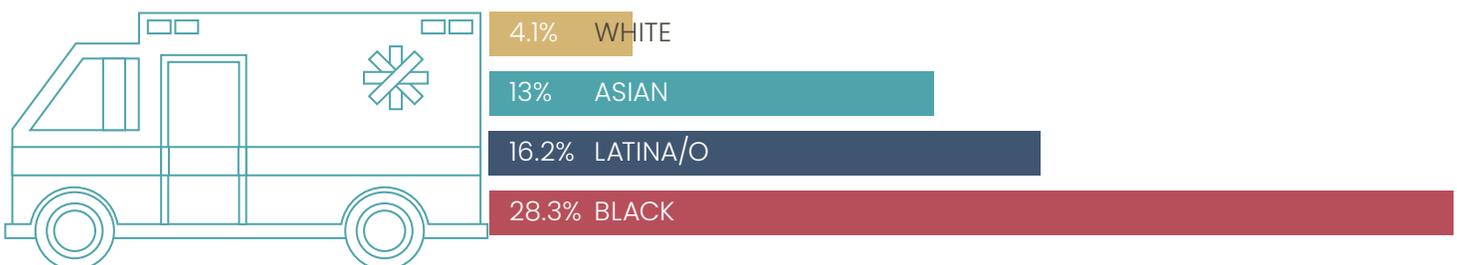
Close to a third of the women who participated in this study (32%) said they had lost such a significant amount of income during the COVID-19 pandemic and indicated that this may well be sufficient to push them out of the sector. It is worth noting that other 'push' factors were identified by women and non-binary photographers in this study, including the lack of diversity, equity and inclusion already prevalent in the industry. These factors are addressed elsewhere in this report.

The proportion of non-binary photographers suffering from financial stress appeared even higher (67%) than the women photographers, but with only a small sample size for this group, it is not possible to make generalizable claims, making this an indication rather than firm evidence.

Mid-career photographers (those in the 30-49 and 50-69 age ranges) reported the highest losses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the midst of an international health crisis, access to health insurance (in some countries, including the U.S.) becomes an especially important factor in supporting sustainability and diversity in the visual media industry. Here, there was a noticeable race-based disparity in access to health insurance among the respondents. Of those in this study who listed visual media as their main source of income, only 4.1% of white photographers reported they did not have health insurance. This compares with 13% of Asian photographers who did not have health insurance and 28.3% of Black respondents and 16.2% of Latina/o respondents who also did not have health insurance. In an industry in which risk, including the risk of personal injury, is already ubiquitous (see Hadland et. al., 2016), access to health insurance in the midst of a pandemic represents an additional obstacle to the creation of an equitable and diverse sector.

HEALTH INSURANCE: PERCENTAGE OF PHOTOGRAPHERS THAT DID NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE



Generally, across most of the respondents, photographers felt they were not being supported adequately in safely carrying out their visual media assignments. Of all the categories of respondents, only those who identified as Asian* or multiracial photographers were evenly split among feeling supported or not.

It is worth noting that financial pressures were felt unevenly across the visual media sector prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. There is a clear racial dimension to this pre-pandemic landscape. According to our data, Black photographers recorded unusually high levels of financial precarity prior to the pandemic with 25% indicating they had little or even no financial stability. By contrast, white photographers reported “a lot to a great deal of” financial security in the period before the pandemic.

Across all the respondents, almost a quarter (24%) said they expressed a high degree of precarity (little to no financial security) while a third (34%) indicated they were relatively comfortable. According to our data, white and multiracial photographers were likely to have more assignments forthcoming or planned and more access to work than people in other categories prior to the pandemic.

Race is again a factor when it comes to annual income. Respondents identifying as “Indigenous” were significantly more likely to earn less than \$25,000 a year when compared to a person who did not identify as a person of color. Respondents identifying as a person of color were significantly more likely to earn less than \$25,000 a year when compared to a person who did not identify as a person of color.

The existence of personal debt appears to be an aggravating factor for many in the visual media industry and a contributor to general levels of precarity. Of all respondents in this study, more than half (54%) reported they were carrying a “great deal” to a “moderate” amount of debt due to payment terms in the industry. Freelance photography payment terms can often be in excess of 2-3 months, meaning the work is done months before a photographer receives payment for their labor.



MORE THAN HALF (54%) REPORTED THEY WERE CARRYING A “GREAT DEAL” TO A “MODERATE” AMOUNT OF DEBT DUE TO PAYMENT TERMS IN THE INDUSTRY.

* The authors of this report acknowledge that people currently living in Asian nations or descending from an Asian ethnicity represent nearly 60% of the global population. As such, it is not realistic to presume that the category of “Asian” can possibly reflect the varied experiences across that extensive diaspora. This is another chronically understudied portion of the photography industry that we hope will be deeply considered in future studies. Thank you to our reviewers for calling attention to this point.



BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN OR LATINA/O PHOTOGRAPHERS INDICATED SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER CONCERN ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO PAY FOR HOUSING

Housing costs are also a significant burden for many in the visual media sector, another dimension which is impacted by race. Specifically, respondents identifying as Black/African American or Latina/o indicated significantly greater concern about their ability to pay for housing when compared to white respondents.

Most of the photographers who participated in this survey have been in the business for more than five years (80%) with more than a quarter having worked in photography for more than 20 years. Most are highly educated as nearly half of the respondents have undergraduate degrees and a quarter have postgraduate qualifications.

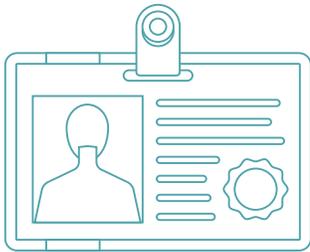
It is worth noting that most of the respondents to this survey are U.S.-based (65%) with previous surveys (Hadland, Campbell and Lambert, 2015) indicating that country of residence is likely to have a significant impact on earnings. U.S.-based photographers are likely to earn more than those in other parts of the world, in particular Africa and Asia. In addition, previous research has tended to have a high proportion of male respondents, whereas this study includes close to 50% female respondents. This is significant when taking into account that **women in this survey reported making \$10,000 USD less in median annual income than their male counterparts.**



WOMEN WERE PAID 10K LESS THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS

Of the photographers who participated in this survey, just over three quarters (75.3%) said they relied heavily on photography for their livelihood. Just over half (57%) classified their reliance on photography as “extremely important” and 18% agreed photography was “very important”. Those who said photography wasn’t important at all in terms of livelihood numbered only 5.6% in total, or 48 photographers of the 858 who chose to answer this question.

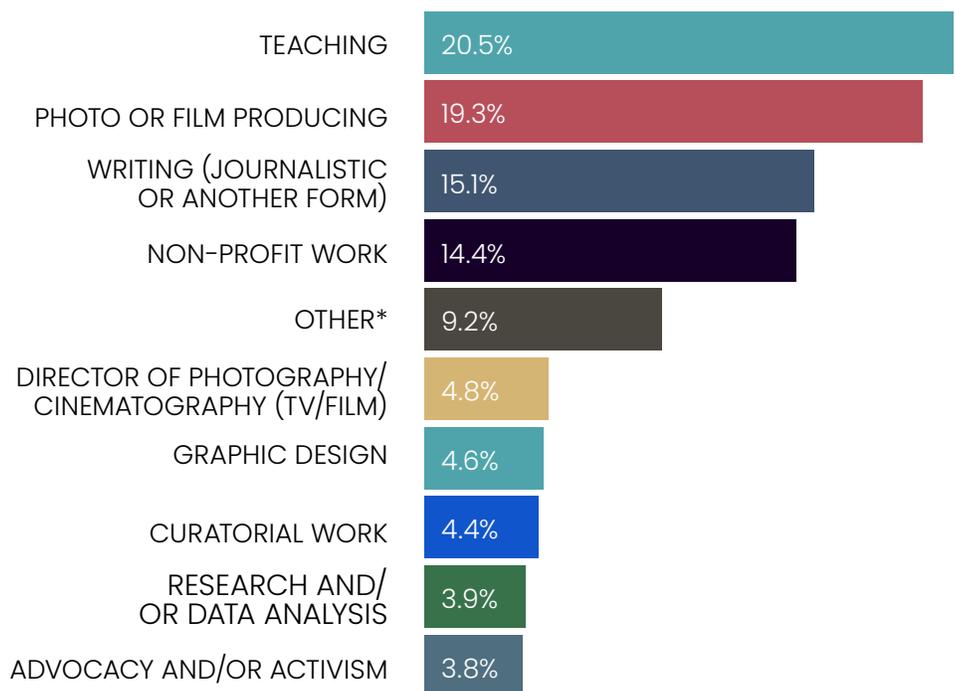
Only half the respondents indicated they were full time photographers with many reporting they carried out a wide range of work, some related to photography and some unrelated, to pay the bills and earn a living. More than 10% of those surveyed don’t work formally as photographers at all or don’t have any other work.



MORE THAN HALF OF THE PARTICIPANTS (55% OF THE RESPONDENTS) INDICATED THEY SUPPLEMENTED THEIR INCOME BY SOME ACTIVITY OTHER THAN PHOTOGRAPHY, SUGGESTING PHOTOGRAPHY ALONE DOES NOT MEET PHOTOGRAPHERS' NEEDS IN MOST CASES.

This data matches the findings from related research which points to a gradually diminishing number of photographers in full-time employment and to a growing pool of photographers who make a living from an increasingly wide range of work and activities. The most popular of these, according to our respondents, are teaching (20.5%), writing (15.1%), non-profit work (14.4%) but also directing work in TV or film (4.8%), and curatorial work (4.4%).

SUPPLEMENTAL INCOME



* ART DIRECTING, FILM DIRECTING, PUBLIC OR POLITICAL SERVICE, HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES (HOTELS, BARS, RESTAURANTS, ETC.), PRODUCTION DESIGN, AND MILITARY SERVICE

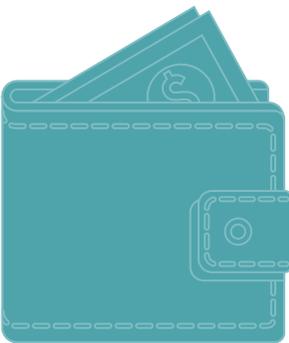
In terms of different types of photography generating income, many respondents indicated a heavy reliance on freelance commissions, with weddings, commercial work, photography grants and exhibits/gallery shows all providing significant income. There does appear to be a correlation between different kinds of photography work and the financial rewards and benefits that accrue. Photographers who reported doing primarily commercial and corporate work tended to make more money, along with sports and portraiture photographers. The lowest paid visual storytellers were those working in NGOs, nonprofits, fine art, weddings and event photography.

When it comes to actual earnings, around half of the respondents (50.2%) earned less than \$40,000 USD a year (after tax) while just under 30% earned less than \$20,000 USD per year. Given that the majority of respondents surveyed live in Los Angeles and New York City — cities where “low-income” is defined as being below \$75,000 and \$40,000* a year respectively — this suggests at least some professional photographers in those locations are living at or near poverty levels.

At the other end of the spectrum, around 15% of respondents take home in excess of \$70,000 USD per year, while just 52 individuals (6% of the respondents) make more than \$100,000 USD per annum. The older respondents were, the more economic stability they reported feeling.

The data also indicated a clear deficit in earnings for marginalized groups (women, non-binary, and POC), with these photographers earning a median income of around \$20,000 – \$29,999 USD, compared to those who were not in a marginalized population who had a median income of \$40,000 – \$49,999 USD.

Similarly, photographers identifying as being from non-Western nations reported significantly lower earnings than their Western counterparts. Those identifying as being from a Western nation showed their median income at \$40,000 – \$49,999 USD, and those who did not identify as being from a Western nation showed median income at \$10,000 – \$19,999 USD.



WHEN IT COMES TO ACTUAL EARNINGS, AROUND HALF OF THE RESPONDENTS (50.2%) EARNED LESS THAN \$40,000 USD A YEAR (AFTER TAX) WHILE JUST UNDER 30% EARNED LESS THAN \$20,000 USD PER YEAR.

EARNINGS

NON-MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS (WHITE AND MALE):

\$40,000 USD – \$49,999 USD



MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS (WOMEN, NON-BINARY, AND POC):

\$20,000 USD – \$29,999 USD



NON-WESTERN POPULATIONS:

\$10,000 USD – \$19,999 USD



Countries in which photographers reported annual income of less than \$10,000 USD included India, Kenya and Nigeria. Income in the \$10,000 - \$19,999 USD bracket was reported by photographers in Brazil, the Philippines, Spain and Italy. The highest income levels for photographers, as indicated by this survey, were the United Kingdom, United States and Switzerland (\$40,000 - \$49,999 USD).

There were some interesting connections in the study between photographers and various factors that had an impact on their financial stability. In attempting to evaluate the significance of privilege* on a photographer's prospects, we examined the correlation between parents' educational status with the photographer's income. And while the connection was strong, and does predict to some degree future income levels, this was evidently only one small part of how one defines privilege.

Numerous other factors including where a respondent lives, what socioeconomic status they are accustomed to, their debt load and so on, make data on financial stability subjective and complex and not reducible to a straight estimation of income. Being part of a marginalized population category, for instance, is also likely to mean less financial stability.

While it is generally the case that the better educated a photographer's parents, the more likely the photographer is to have a degree of financial stability, we were also expecting photographers with dependents to have a lesser degree of financial stability. This was, however, not the case. There was no correlation in our data between responsibility for dependents and financial stability. This may be because most of our respondents didn't have dependents (61.4%), and of those who did, only a small fraction fell into potentially more vulnerable categories such as single parents. For most respondents, this simply wasn't an issue of significance.

INDUSTRY DEMOGRAPHICS, (IN)EQUITY & PRECARIETY

A KEY ELEMENT IN THE DESIGN OF THIS STUDY WAS ASKING QUESTIONS TO HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF WORKING PHOTOGRAPHERS AND HOW IDENTITY IMPACTS BOTH ENTRY TO THE PROFESSIONAL PHOTO INDUSTRY AND RETENTION OF DIVERSE PHOTOGRAPHERS. WHILE WE HAVE ALREADY ACKNOWLEDGED THE LIMITATIONS OF A SURVEY RESPONDENT POOL TAKEN FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PHOTO CONTEST, THE DATA FROM THE WPPF STATE OF NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIES INDICATED ONLY 15–18% OF PHOTOGRAPHERS SURVEYED WERE WOMEN, WHICH IS STILL A CAUSE FOR CONCERN. THOSE STATISTICS SUGGESTED THAT THE MAKEUP OF THE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY PROFESSION IS EXCEEDINGLY HOMOGENOUS, WITH MEN MAKING MOST OF THE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS WE SEE.

In stark contrast, the respondent pool of our State of Photography 2022 survey proved to be much more diverse, with nearly half (49.46%) of respondents identifying as female, 46.23% male, and 1.97% non-binary or gender nonconforming. Transgender and two-spirit identities represented 0.45% and 0.36% respectively.* (0.90% responded as “Prefer not to say,” and 0.63 Self-described to a non-listed category.)

* We chose to offer “male”, “female”, and “transgender” rather than “cis-female” and “cis-male” as options on this survey due to the widely varying knowledge of gendered language in a global audience.

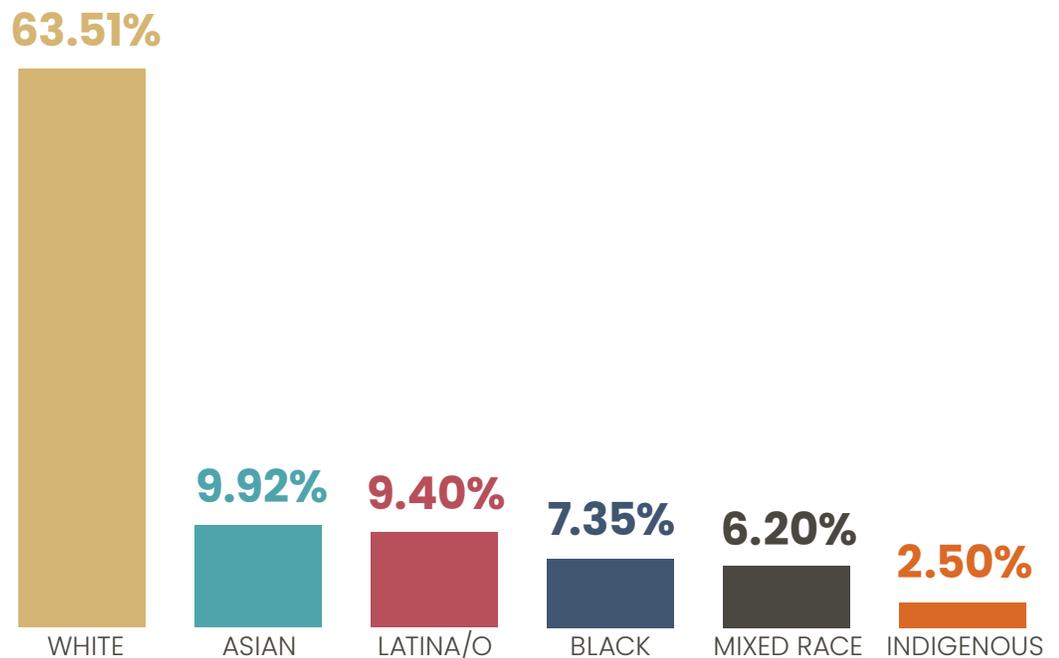
Image by Kai Elmer / Felix Uribe / CatchLight. Felix Uribe, CatchLight Local Fellow, documenting the scenes and citizens in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood, as part of the CatchLight Local Visual Desk, a new collaborative model for visual journalism looking to increase community representation as well as as well as the number of staff visual journalists in local news.

A small portion of photographer respondents identified as having a disability (5.9%). This is an exceptionally understudied portion of the photo industry that deserves considerably more attention to recognize the lived experiences of this community. This study is the first of the surveys to ask a question about disability demographics specifically.

There was slightly more racial diversity represented in this study as well, though the majority of photographers surveyed identified as white (63.51%) with only 9.92% identifying as Asian; 9.40% Latina/o; 7.35% Black (non-Hispanic); 6.20% as mixed-racial or ethnic heritage; and 2.50% Indigenous (to the Americas). Across these and various other racial and ethnic groups represented in this survey, 27.5% of respondents identified as a “person of color”: a term that is useful in understanding which photographers in the study might experience racial marginalization.

RACIAL BREAKDOWN

ACROSS THESE AND VARIOUS OTHER RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS REPRESENTED IN THIS SURVEY, 27.5% OF RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED AS A “PERSON OF COLOR”.



These demographics place the photography profession¹ slightly below the U.S. racial averages for arts and media professionals according to a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute (Wilson et al, 2021). That study showed the clear racial segregation of professional industries with a consistent white majority in the workforce across health, legal, media, arts, business, natural sciences, architecture, engineering, etc. Numbers on a global professional pool are more difficult to come by so the U.S.-centric EPI data is limited in its usefulness as a comparative against our own international study.

What is most notable about the race and ethnicity demographic breakdowns highlighted in our study is that it indicates that white photographers are the single largest racial group in the photo industry (at 47.3%). Those statistics point to a lack of diverse visual perspectives along racial and ethnic backgrounds across news, editorial, documentary, and commercial image makers, which should be of concern for an industry that visually represents a very racially diverse world.

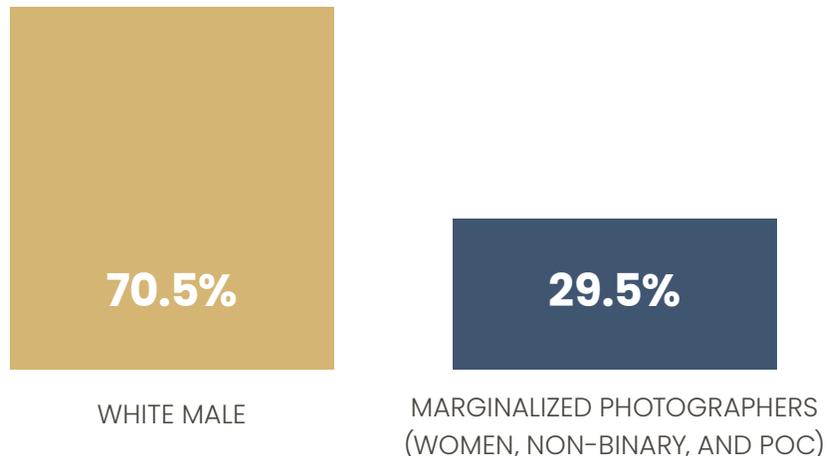
Also of concern is the clear pay disparity, where all marginalized photographers in this study, inclusive of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability, are making considerably less median income than photographers who are not from historically marginalized backgrounds and identities. Those pay disparities are discussed in greater detail in the financial section of this report and should be noted as a potential obstacle to industry retention of diverse photographers.

Another main aim of this study was to understand what factors might limit diverse entrants to the field of professional photography. As such, many of our questions inquired about the success or lack thereof that people have experienced in acquiring photo grants, awards, speaking engagements at major festivals, exhibitions, and consistent assignment or commissioned photography work. These forms of recognition provide funding, amplify individual photographers' work and signal future success because the more professional recognition your photo work receives, the more and higher paying photo work one is likely to get.

On the average, 53.3% of all respondents (702) indicated that they applied for awards and grants. Of those who do pursue awards and grants, respondents who identify as POC, women, non-binary, and/or as having a disability were all more likely to enter photo contests and apply for grants (70.5%) than white male photographers (29.5%). We saw a uniform 22.69% decrease in participation among these groups for awards and grants when there was an entry fee involved (543). However, among those who enter contests, awards and grants, there was a significantly higher drop of 29.15% from those in POC communities in their willingness to participate when entrance fees were involved, when compared to those who were not POC (a 19.12% decrease). This aligns with the data that indicates photographers from marginalized communities are less likely to be paid a livable wage for their work, making entrance fees a heavier burden for these photographers than for others.

AWARD APPLICATION BREAKDOWN

ON THE AVERAGE, 53.3% OF ALL RESPONDENTS (702) INDICATED THAT THEY APPLIED FOR AWARDS AND GRANTS.



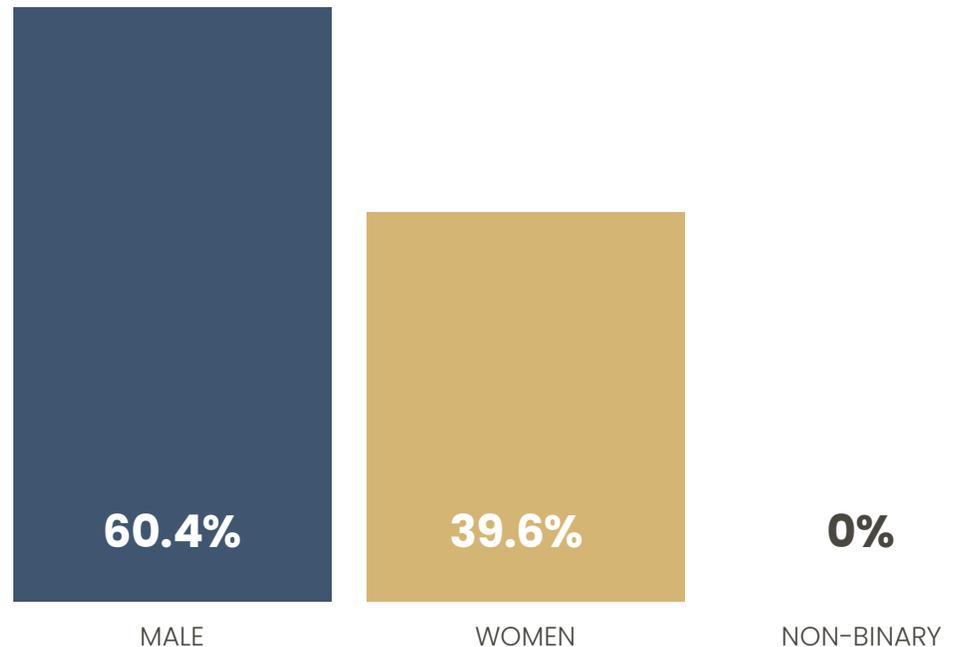
The data on who actually receives grants, photo awards, and other professional recognition is harder to parse. A number of survey items inquired to what degree respondents were recognized through receiving (1) awards, (2) grants, (3) invitations to speak at workshops or exhibitions, (4) invitations to exhibit their work, or (5) portfolio reviews, with self-reported three-point Likert responses (i.e., never, sometimes, consistently). Additionally, a scaled five-level variable was created to explore for patterns among photographers who report consistent recognitions among *multiple categories*: 1= reported consistently receiving one type of recognition, 2= consistently receives two types, 3= three types, 4=four types, and 5= reported consistently receiving all 5 types of recognition.



Among those who claim to “consistently win photo awards,” male photographers were more likely to make that claim (60.4%) than women (39.6%) and non-binary photographers (0%), despite men being purportedly less likely to enter such competitions to begin with. Female photographers were far more likely to say that they “sometimes win awards” (52.2%), compared to men (45.8%) and non-binary photographers (1.9%). Interestingly, among those who indicated they have received grants, women were more likely to report this type of recognition (59.0%) than did men (37.4%). People of color, non-binary and photographers with a disability were significantly under-represented among those who indicated they received recognition through awards (23.9%) when compared with those not in those groups (76.1%).

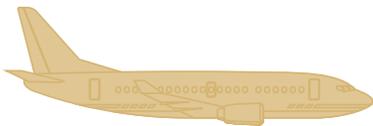
AWARDEE BREAKDOWN

AMONG THOSE WHO CLAIM TO “CONSISTENTLY WIN PHOTO AWARDS,” MALE PHOTOGRAPHERS WERE MORE LIKELY TO MAKE THAT CLAIM (60.4%) THAN WOMEN (39.6%) AND NON-BINARY PHOTOGRAPHERS (0%), DESPITE MEN BEING PURPORTEDLY LESS LIKELY TO ENTER SUCH COMPETITIONS TO BEGIN WITH.



It’s important to stress that this “compounded professional recognition” measure, as an indicator of elite status, is undeniably subjective and has limitations. First, these survey items are reliant on self-reports, and where the notion of being “consistently [recognized]” is open to a wide variety of subjective interpretations, depending on the respondent. Secondly, this single variable falls short of creating an exhaustive measure of elite status.

For example, a photographer who is recognized with one award – a Pulitzer Prize, for instance – might arguably enjoy very high levels of luminary status based on that single honor.



8%

vs

3%

Career success is a highly nuanced and multifaceted construct (see Heslin, 2005, for more). An ideal set of measures should include both objective as well as subjective measures, which lie beyond the scope of this survey, and for that matter, this report. With that said, we hope these measures and data provide enough of a snapshot to begin a conversation about who might benefit from awards, grants, and other photo industry accolades among prestige-level photographers.

Another key interest of the researchers was to understand the flows of travel for photography. The data indicated that, prior to the COVID-19 health crisis, photographers of color were significantly less likely to travel outside of their home country to produce photography work – more than 2-times less (a 37.8% decrease) than their white counterparts. Additional information is required to know if certain photographers are less likely to be given photo assignments that require travel or if they are also more likely to focus on personal projects closer to home.

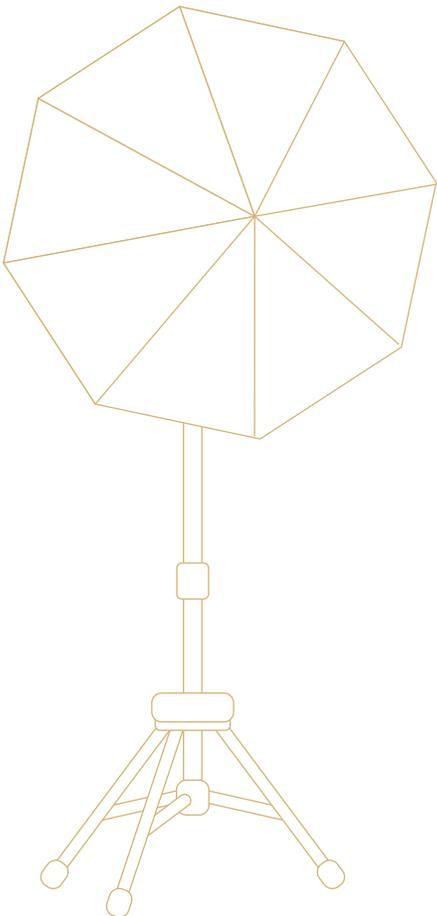
WE FOUND AN INTERESTING PATTERN WHEREIN PHOTOGRAPHERS BORN IN NON-WESTERN NATIONS ARE OFTEN EMIGRATING TO WESTERN NATIONS (8.1%, WHICH GREATLY OUT-PACED WESTERN PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO RESIDE IN NON-WESTERN NATIONS (3.0%)

This line of inquiry begs the question of where photographers typically reside and where they most often work. Respondents were asked to indicate what country they were born in, where they are currently based and what nation or region they do the majority of their work. New York City, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. collectively surpassed all other cities with the highest number of responses for where respondents typically lived. The majority of those who responded live in North America in the United States (651) and the western states of the U.S. had the highest concentration of working photographers than any other region in the world. While most respondents resided in their home countries (88.9%) we found an interesting pattern wherein photographers born in non-Western nations are often emigrating to Western nations (8.1%, which greatly out-paced Western photographers who reside in non-Western nations (3.0%). A strong majority of the non-Western expatriates working in the West are in the U.S. (78.5%), where they indicate the majority of their work takes place.

Millennials were significantly more likely to disclose their salary information in the space of the anonymous survey, with around 98% offering their income range. Comparatively, photographers from the Baby Boomer and Generation X age ranges were significantly more reticent to disclose their income category. This is an interesting data point given the recent move in the industry to unveil salary and assignment rate info, pushing back against what has been insinuated to be industry gatekeeping. Efforts like [F*** Gatekeeping: A Professional Photographic Knowledge Base](#) and Diversify Photo and Women Photograph's [Photographer Pay Equity Project](#) foreground the sharing of financial information as a necessary baseline for building community knowledge and making photography an accessible profession.

Photography collectives and organizations that often launch professional photography careers have maintained elite and often inaccessible status for the better part of a century. There is, however, a growing movement in the last decade to create identity-based spaces and actively to encourage diverse memberships among traditionally white and male photo organizations. Results from this study indicated that photographers who identified as POC, women, and/or non-binary were significantly more likely to seek membership in professional organizations and associations than those who did not identify as coming from any of those marginalized groups. This could suggest that marginalized photographers are more likely to seek and build community within the industry in general. It is difficult to ascertain whether these statistics speak to the increase in available identity-based photo communities (such as Women Photograph, Authority Collective, Indigenous Photograph, Black Women Photographers and African Photojournalism Database among many others) or if they point back to the very need for such organizations that instigated their creation.

One finding that these identity-based organizations have been addressing is the limited access to sufficient training for hazardous environments in photography work. Respondents who identified as women were significantly less likely to say they had received the training and equipment they felt they needed to do their job safely in situations of civil unrest or political conflict when compared to male photographer respondents. As photojournalists are increasingly under threat while performing the duties of their job, this disparity in access to training for risk management and first aid is of particular note and is more thoroughly engaged in the section on Risk, Challenges and Shifting Industry Norms.



61%

OF PEOPLE SURVEYED HAVE NO DEPENDENTS AND THE MOST COMMON HOUSEHOLD MAKEUP FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS IS A COUPLE WITH NO CHILDREN (34.86%).

Another finding along gendered lines that needs additional unpacking is the higher percentage of male photographers who indicated they have dependents. Men were 14.2% more likely to have dependents than women. A majority of people surveyed have no dependents (60.61%) and the most common household makeup for survey respondents is a couple with no children (34.86%). Another 25.57% are single without children and 23.29% have at least one child they live with as a couple. Only 3.5% lived in households with a child where they are the single parent but 5.15% of people surveyed indicated they have sole financial responsibility for one or more dependents. Women, non-binary, and photographers of color were all significantly less likely to have dependents than men in this study. There is not enough information from this study to clarify what might be responsible for this disproportionate relationship to having dependents, whether it suggests limited necessary resources (i.e. time, income, or living situation), a matter of choice, or other elements.

RISK, CHALLENGES & SHIFTING INDUSTRY NORMS

THE STATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY 2022 SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED IN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASED GLOBAL AWARENESS OF, AND PROTEST ABOUT, IDENTITY ISSUES. WHILE BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM) AS A DECENTRALIZED SOCIAL MOVEMENT DATES FROM 2013, IT WAS ACTIVATED AGAIN BY THE POLICE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD IN MAY 2020, SPURRING GLOBAL PROTESTS BOTH WITHIN THE U.S. AND GLOBALLY. THESE PROTESTS DEMANDED A RECKONING WITH STRUCTURAL RACISM, AND THEY INTERSECTED WITH OTHER SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES, SUCH AS THE #METOO MOVEMENT, TO PUSH IDENTITY ISSUES TOWARD THE TOP OF CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL AGENDAS.

Within photography, the release of the Photo Bill of Rights was a response to this context of increasing protest, risk and precarity. Similarly, the earlier 2020 CatchLight survey touched on some of these issues, identifying, for example, how contracting coronavirus was an issue at social justice protests. Continuing in this vein, the State of Photography 2022 survey asked several questions about the identity-based challenges faced by photographers, i.e., structural racism, sexual harassment/discrimination, ageism, ableism, etc. Gathering more specific data on how these issues are understood and felt is the necessary first step in finding ways to more effectively address these issues within the profession.

Image by Max Herman / CatchLight Local. Samantha Cabrera Friend, CatchLight Local Fellow, documenting the citizens of Garfield Park, Chicago, was part of the CatchLight Local Visual Desk, a new collaborative model for visual journalism looking to increase community representation as well as the number of staff visual journalists in local news.

In terms of perceptions of problems in the field, there was robust (averaging 78.6%) agreement among those responding that sexism, socioeconomic disparity (77.59%), and structural racism (75.12%) were all issues present in the industry.

PROBLEMS IN THE FIELD

WHILE BOTH MEN AND WOMEN RECORDED HIGH AGREEMENT THAT “SEXISM IS PRESENT IN THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMUNITY,” WOMEN (84.56%) STATED THAT IT WAS A MORE SIGNIFICANT ISSUE THAN MEN (71.72%). WOMEN ALSO REPORTED BEING AFFECTED BY SEXISM (65.98%) SIGNIFICANTLY MORE THAN MEN (21.36%).

78.6%

SEXISM

75.12%

RACISM

Physical disabilities or the neurodivergence of a photographer were recognized as issues by a strong majority (68.09% average in agreement), while overall respondents showed moderate concern that age can limit a photographer’s potential success (average agreement was 59.11%).

The responses show that, among the available options, the highest reported impact is for respondents indicating that they were “personally affected by or experienced sexism or gender discrimination.” While both men and women recorded high agreement that “sexism is present in the photography community,” women (84.56%) stated that it was a more significant issue than men (71.72%). Women also reported being affected by sexism (65.98%) significantly more than men (21.36%). Sexual harassment was widely recognized as a problem for the industry (68.93% in agreement).



78%

OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVED THAT SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITY GENERALLY LIMITED A PHOTOGRAPHER'S SUCCESS

Asked to respond to the significance of socioeconomic disparity, the belief that it generally limited photographer's success (77.59% average agreement) was much greater than the perception respondents had been personally disadvantaged (51.60%). Among respondents earning 50% or more of their income from photography, there was significant correlation between lower income earners and belief that socioeconomic disparity was an issue in the field, when compared to higher earners. There was a similar dynamic when it came to the impact of age. Recall that while respondents showed moderate concern that age can limit a photographer's potential success, they indicated to a lesser degree that age has disadvantaged them in their career (43.10%). It's worth saying that the survey sample "skewed young" in this overall sample (the average age at the younger end of the Generation X cohort). As such, there was very high correlation between respondent age and agreement that ageism is a problem. – continuing the "seeing is believing" effect that's suggested in much of these results.

With structural racism, we again see wide recognition that this is an industry problem. Though fewer respondents reported personal experience of structural racism (35.44%) before we factored in identity into that assessment. Once we do factor in the identity of respondents, we see that race plays a critical role in shaping the responses about experiences. Respondents who were people of color (POC) indicated agreement that "structural racism is present in the photography industry" (79.10% in agreement), as did those respondents who were not in the POC category (73.10%). However, this is a statistically significant divergence. Respondents in the POC category indicated being affected by racism significantly more (52.10% average agreement) than those not in the POC category (22.86%).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 60% of respondents said they felt their work involved acceptable risk, ranging from slightly acceptable to perfectly acceptable. Just over 20% were neutral regarding this feeling, while 14% maintained they felt unacceptable levels of risk. Within these findings, there were notable variations based on a photographer's identity. There was a statistically significant effect in mean comparisons with POC reporting feelings of being at higher risk before COVID-19. They reported risk feelings both higher than average and higher than those who did not identify as POC. For all respondents, the level of unacceptable risk escalated during the pandemic. Nearly half said they faced some degree of unacceptable risk.

When asked about the types of risk photographers faced, 38% cited health and psychological risks, 27% named abuse from law enforcement or

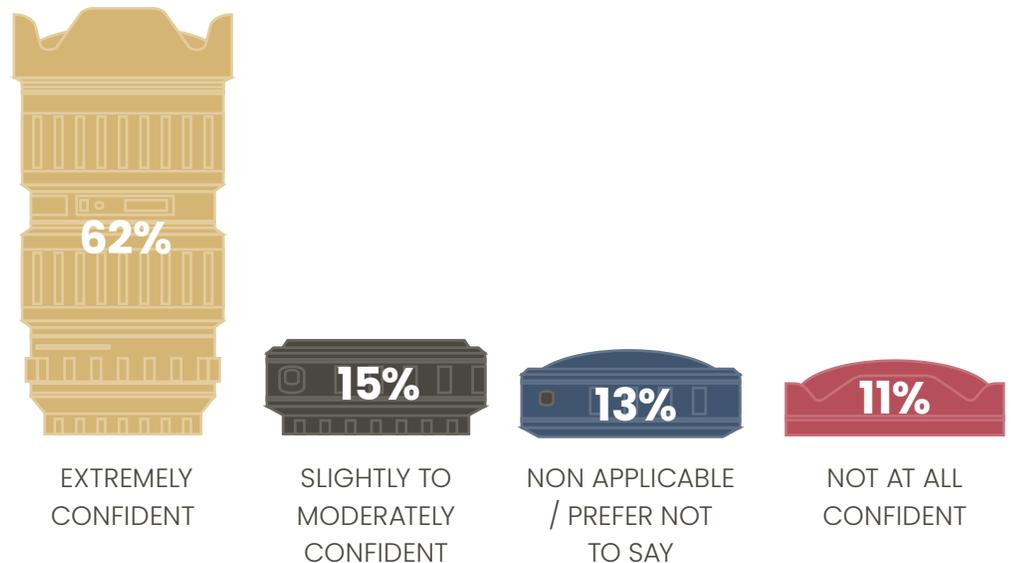
detention, and nearly 20% said assault. Armed conflict (9%) was the least cited risk. More than three-quarters of respondents noted health and psychological risks, declaring that mental health and wellness was at least occasionally an issue (with nearly one-quarter saying it was usually or always an issue).

Risk is something that respondents generally accept in their work. More than 88% said they sometimes, almost always, or always accept risk. Only 8% said they never or rarely took a risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in myriad of risks to workers. The overwhelming majority of respondents (85%) felt they were to some degree vulnerable to the virus, with only 12% saying they were not at all vulnerable.

When asked how confident they were that they had received appropriate training and equipment to do their job safely during the pandemic, only 11% were ‘not at all confident’, while 62% were extremely confident, with the remaining 15% ranging from slightly to moderately confident. Again, though, these headline numbers contain some significant differences, with female-identifying respondents disproportionately less confident when compared to male-identifying respondents. Furthermore, female and/or POC, gender-non-conforming, non-binary, transgender and/or people with a disability were disproportionately more likely to indicate that they were “not at all confident” at a statistically significant level.

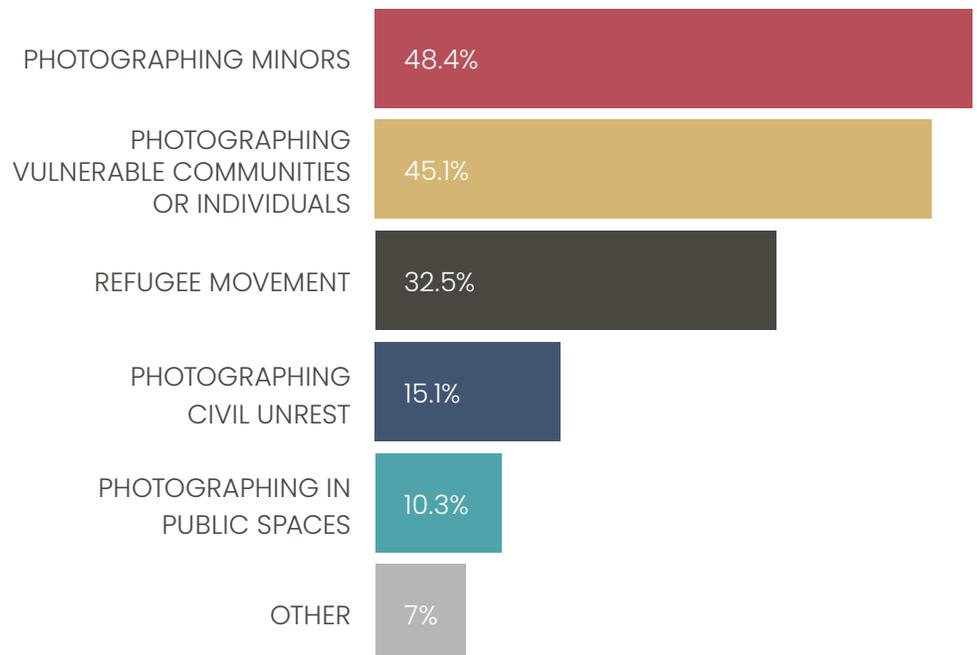
SAFETY TRAINING



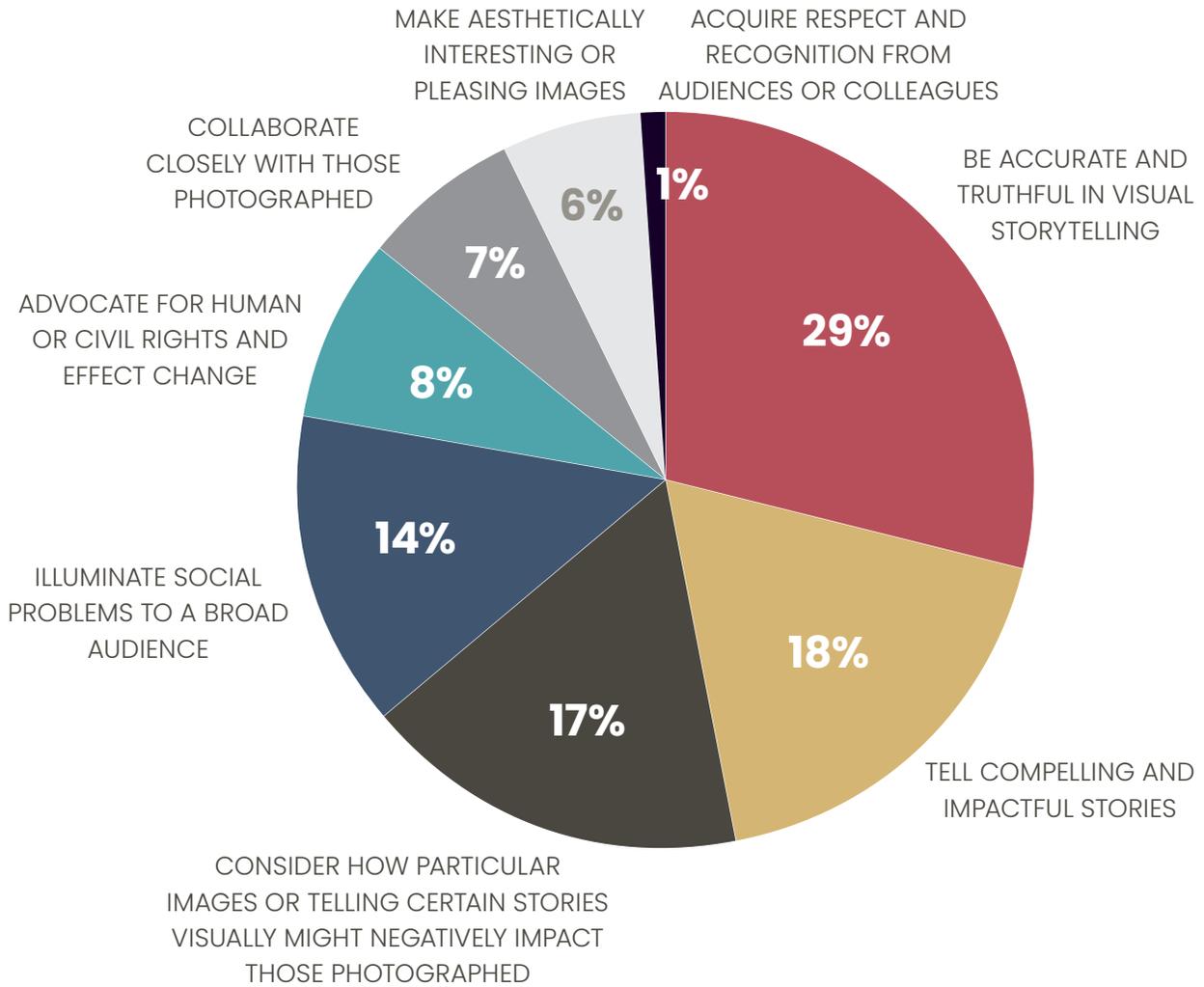
When the questions shifted to ask about whether or not they had received appropriate training to do their job safely in civil unrest or political conflict situations, the levels of confidence declined, with 28% saying they were not at all confident. Those who were extremely confident halved to 7%, with just under 50% (down from 63%) saying they were slightly to moderately confident.

Concerning the ethical issues for photography posed in the survey, most photographers agreed there were serious issues. Answering on a scale of zero to 100 - with zero meaning "not at all" and 100 meaning "very much so" - most respondents agreed digital manipulation was a serious issue (60 was the average). For other forms of manipulation (e.g., staging, posing, or directing photos), just over 60 was the average for this being understood as a serious issue. Despite these concerns, when asked "to what extent do you think the general public trusts photojournalism?" the average among respondents was 56.

Consent was also a topic the survey explored. Respondents were asked to select one scenario when they should, if logistically possible, get consent. Ranked from highest to lowest, these were:

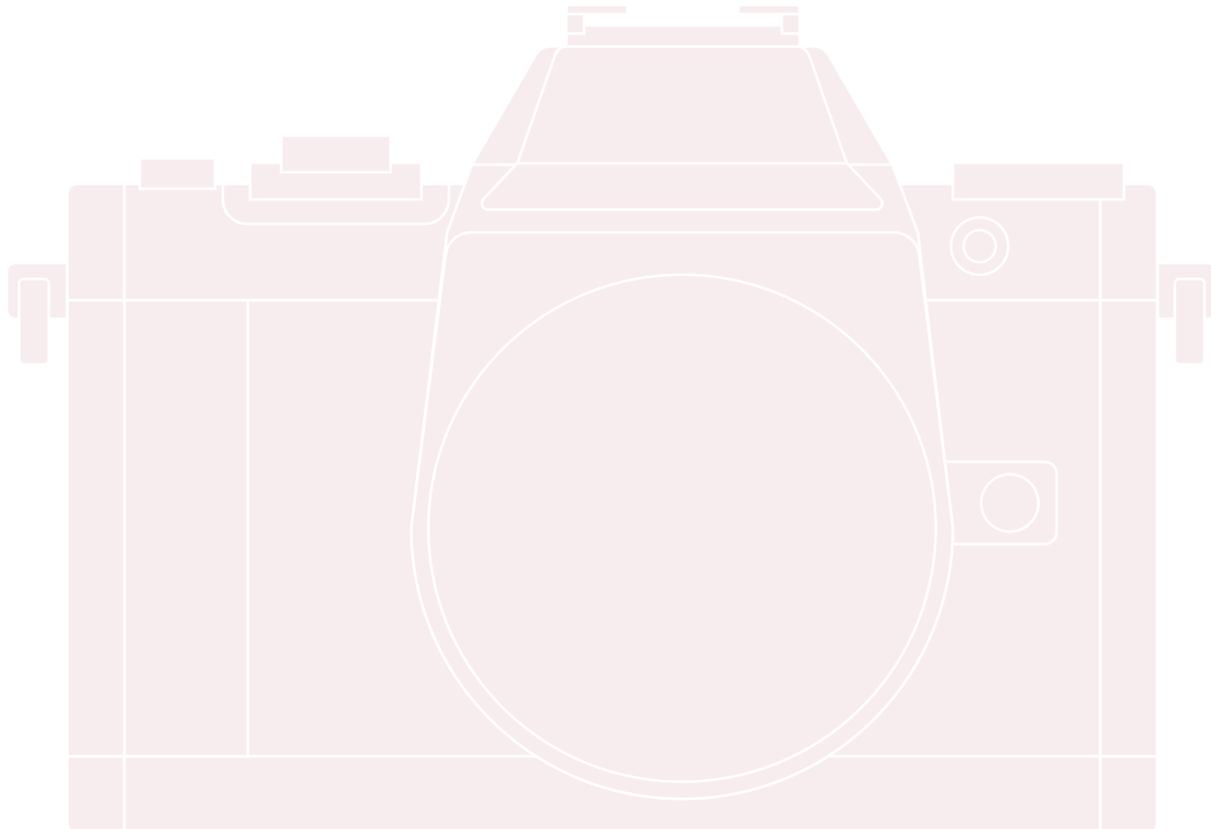


The survey asked photographers to choose up to three phrases that best describe the roles and responsibilities photographers should prioritize. Ranked from highest to lowest, the responses were:



Although much of the survey focused on dilemmas and problems, respondents were quite hopeful solutions to the challenges photographers face could be found, with 38% saying yes, 48% saying maybe, and only 11% saying no.

This positivity concerning solutions was also reflected in the final assessment, where respondents were asked to rate their general happiness with the profession of photography. Some 62% were slightly to extremely happy (with the bulk, 31%, being moderately happy). In contrast, 29% were slightly to extremely unhappy (with the bulk, 15%, being slightly unhappy).



CONCLUSION: FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE FIELD

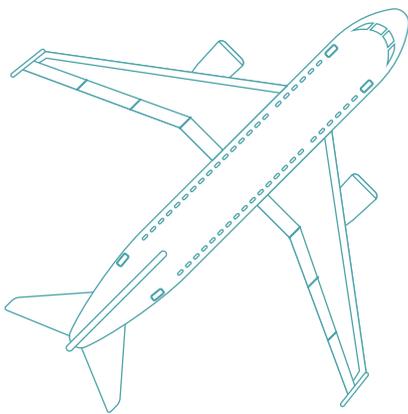
THE STATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY 2022 SURVEY, BUILDING ON OTHER PRIOR SURVEYS, IS INTENDED TO OFFER A ROBUST SNAPSHOT OF THE PROFESSION. WHILE WE BELIEVE THE FIELD OF PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY REMAINS UNDERSTUDIED – DESPITE THE CENTRALITY AND GROWING IMPORTANCE OF VISUALS IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE – WE THINK THIS REPORT ADDS A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF EVIDENCE-BASED INFORMATION FOR THE ON-GOING CONVERSATION ABOUT HOW TO BUILD A MORE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS.

In particular, our goal has been to better understand in greater depth the experiences faced by photographers from marginalized communities. As a result, this report has looked at issues like financial insecurity, risk and ethics, and how they intersect with various demographic dimensions.

In this conclusion we want to draw attention to some key points and the questions they raise. Our purpose has never been to offer easy answers to the issues the survey has identified, but we do believe that the data we have reported on helps sharpen some of the challenges we all face. These include:

- **The data shows, across all demographic grounds, there is very broad agreement that racism and sexism are huge problems for the field.**

That indicates there is a solid foundation on which to build a progressive response, as solutions are not possible if problems are not generally accepted. However, this consensus begs the question how this broad agreement can or will be activated for change. The identity-based photography organizations who were important to this survey will likely be major drivers of change, but we now need to find ways to use this consensus to produce specific measures that can effectively address racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.



- In a climate of great attention being paid (rightly) to the identity of those who do visual storytelling, this survey produced an interesting finding that complicates the way we understand the relationship between identity and perspectives. **When we asked about photographer nationality and where they are working, we found that photographers from around the world seem to be migrating to the U.S.** Indeed, in the survey, nearly 90% of photographers who said they are from a non-Western nation are now in fact working in a Western nation. While this number reflects the way the survey circulated and to whom, it nonetheless also points to a growing diaspora of photographers in the West. This knowledge complicates existing narratives of Western versus non-Western as ways to organize our understanding of identity and perspective. Future surveys of the photography field might seek to better understand how the photo industry is affected by these migration movements. It would be especially useful to have a clearer picture on how assigning practices of media organizations might be related to these diasporic shifts.

- **Our study affirms previous research highlighting the financial precarity faced by photographers** in an industry that is clearly in flux and has been so for a while. This precarity, however, as this work attests, is not evenly experienced. Race, gender and nationality all have a profound impact on how precarity is distributed across the photographic community. For example, people of color, women and citizens of non-Western states are at a clear and demonstrable disadvantage in terms of their access

to commissions and contracts. This threatens not only their continued participation in the field, but also the distortion of how news is portrayed visually and over the long term. What was already an unbalanced scenario has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Commercial relationships which embraced diversity and which were already fragile prior to COVID-19 unraveled when lockdown, isolation and the cancelation of large events led the industry once more to rely on white, male, Western photographers.

- **Close to a third of women photographers who participated in this study said they had lost such a significant amount of income** during the pandemic and indicated that this may well be sufficient to push them out of the sector. Access to health insurance, in the midst of a health crisis, also adversely affected photographers in already marginalized groupings. Unevenly distributed personal debt and housing costs added yet more pressure. Put simply, COVID-19 has reversed modest gains in diversification and imperils the hopes of many for an equitable and diverse industry.
- Through this survey, **we learned that younger photographers — especially millennials — tended to be more willing to share information openly about their finances and other resources at their disposal.** We also noticed a move toward membership in supportive photo-focused communities, especially for those photographers from historically marginalized identities. Taken in tandem, these two data points suggest an opportunity for community-engaged photographers to share resources, support one another, and create new approaches to photographic work that's less singular and more collaborative. More information shared begets and informs community-building around key issues within the field, which increases the possibility of better solutions for all.





There are a few major remaining questions and spaces of opportunity for future research directions:

- While we worked toward identifying limitations of access to the photography profession in this study, **additional information is needed to better understand how photographers achieve success as freelancers and engender elite status over time to support a consistent professional career.** Further analysis is also required to assess whether there has been a move away from staff photography positions and toward freelance work, as editorial outlets tighten budgets and appear to be hiring local photographers more frequently.
- Additionally, **further inquiry is necessary to understand how photo work might impact photographers' ability to build and support families.** The survey data indicating women are far less likely to have dependents could be interpreted various ways. Qualitative commentary, however, supports the hypothesis that women photographers might be less supported within the profession when becoming mothers or caretakers. The gender pay disparity in photo work could also come into play in a more thorough assessment of this aspect of photographers' lives.
- **The data from this study supports findings from other related research that points to a gradually diminishing number of photographers in full-time employment** – and to a growing pool of photographers who make a living from an increasingly wide range of work and activities, only some of which involves photographs. Ironically, at a moment when the image has never been as ubiquitous or as powerful, full time professional photographers have become an endangered species. This has profound social and political implications for both the consumers and producers of news in the 21st Century.

Finally, we want to underscore the fact that, despite the various difficulties, risks, and levels of precarity experienced across the field, photographers still stated they are generally happy with working as photographers. This suggests a profession deeply valued by its practitioners and an industry perhaps ready to collectively engage ways to improve the field such that all photographers might experience that happiness with their work.

IMPLICATIONS & SOLUTIONS FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHY INDUSTRY

1. **The lack of equity and parity within the photography profession is directly contributing to its inability to recruit and retain diverse photographers.** COVID-19 has exacerbated the already lacking equal opportunities and equivalent rewards prior to the pandemic. Commissioning practices, among other factors, are leaving many female photographers specifically on the brink of leaving the industry. A permanent and deepening distortion in the gender balance of photojournalists would lead not only to a narrowing of diversity within the profession but would limit diversity in the images and stories generated by it, to the detriment of all, not least the stories and experiences of the most marginalized global voices.
2. This threat faces many other groups who have been structurally disadvantaged in the industry as a consequence of their race, nationality or gender, causing greater vulnerability to financial precarity including lower incomes, higher debt, higher housing costs and lack of access to health care. **The photography industry needs to first seek to understand the current disparities that exist with regard to gender, race/ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic background and nationality** and to further acknowledge the damage such inequity will continue to cause the visual media sector in the longer term.
3. This situation requires a concerted and expansive response from the photo industry as a whole in order to significantly affect change. **It requires commitment to the creation and sustenance of an equitable photography industry, operating on the basis of fair and ethical commissioning and remuneration practices** that take into consideration the myriad of ways in which historically marginalized groups are disenfranchised through systemic inequities. Initiatives need to be established across the industry's career-building spaces from photography education, to assigning/commissioning institutions and award/grant organizations that are aimed at recruiting, supporting and funding photographers from all currently marginalized sectors.



4. **A clear understanding of barriers to entry and retention in the field is necessary to make any diversity efforts actually useful.** There are many financial requirements inherent to the photographic field and a general lack of transparency around professional aspects of the industry further exacerbate those existing financial inequities. A willingness to share information, access and resources among photographers would greatly shift the industry to be welcoming, inclusive and accessible for all. To stabilize pay disparities, photography assigning organizations must institute consistent payment terms, limiting the amount of debt photographers carry in order to take on assignments. This is a space of severe financial precarity and disparity based on socioeconomic backgrounds.



5. **The amount of risks photographers are expected and/or willing to take within their photography work is not in line with the amount of training and resources photographers report having access to.** A concerted effort must be made by all photography institutions and assigning organizations to provide safety resources, training and support that take into consideration the specific embodiments and lived experiences of photographers i.e. the differing needs and risks faced by women, nonbinary and transgender people and people with differing abilities, among various other identity spaces. Additionally, safety training should include trauma-informed resources that recognize the mental health impacts of journalistic work specifically.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1

RESPONDENTS WHO INDICATED THEIR COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Country	N	%	Country	N	%
United States	611	46.1%	Uruguay	2	0.2%
United Kingdom	42	3.2%	Ukraine	2	0.2%
Canada	38	2.9%	Uganda	2	0.2%
India	20	1.5%	Singapore	2	0.2%
Germany	17	1.3%	Serbia	2	0.2%
South Africa	15	1.1%	Nicaragua	2	0.2%
Mexico	15	1.1%	Malaysia	2	0.2%
France	15	1.1%	Finland	2	0.2%
Nigeria	13	1.0%	Egypt	2	0.2%
Korea, South	13	1.0%	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	2	0.2%
Spain	11	0.8%	Bulgaria	2	0.2%
Philippines	11	0.8%	Tanzania	1	0.1%
Italy	11	0.8%	Sudan	1	0.1%
Australia	10	0.8%	Somalia	1	0.1%
Venezuela	8	0.6%	Slovakia	1	0.1%
Sweden	8	0.6%	Saudi Arabia	1	0.1%
Peru	8	0.6%	San Marino	1	0.1%
Brazil	8	0.6%	Romania	1	0.1%
Argentina	8	0.6%	Panama	1	0.1%
Russia	7	0.5%	Pakistan	1	0.1%
Poland	7	0.5%	New Zealand	1	0.1%
Kenya	7	0.5%	Nepal	1	0.1%
Switzerland	6	0.5%	Moldova	1	0.1%
Iran	6	0.5%	Malawi	1	0.1%
Vietnam	5	0.4%	Luxembourg	1	0.1%
Taiwan	5	0.4%	Libya	1	0.1%
Netherlands	5	0.4%	Liberia	1	0.1%
Israel	5	0.4%	Lebanon	1	0.1%
Indonesia	5	0.4%	Latvia	1	0.1%
Ecuador	5	0.4%	Jordan	1	0.1%
Colombia	5	0.4%	Georgia	1	0.1%
Greece	4	0.3%	Dominican Republic	1	0.1%
Ethiopia	4	0.3%	Czech Republic	1	0.1%
Chile	4	0.3%	Croatia	1	0.1%
Belgium	4	0.3%	Costa Rica	1	0.1%
Zimbabwe	3	0.2%	China	1	0.1%
Turkey	3	0.2%	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	0.1%
Portugal	3	0.2%	Bolivia	1	0.1%
Norway	3	0.2%	Bangladesh	1	0.1%
Japan	3	0.2%	Armenia	1	0.1%
Ireland	3	0.2%	Andorra	1	0.1%
Guatemala	3	0.2%	Algeria	1	0.1%
El Salvador	3	0.2%	Albania	1	0.1%
Denmark	3	0.2%			

TABLE 2

**MARGINALIZED GROUP
REPRESENTATION AS
IDENTIFIED AMONG
RESPONDENTS**

Baseline characteristic	Number/percentage of respondents identifying as...	
	n	%
Gender		
Female	528	49.8%
Male	488	46.0%
Non-binary or gender-nonconforming	22	1.70%
Transgender	7	0.7%
Two-spirit	4	0.4%
Prefer not to say	9	0.8%
Self-describe	2	0.2%
Person of Color (POC)		
Person of color	364	27.50%
Did not indicate being a person of color	961	72.50%
Disability		
Person with a disability	63	6.00%
Did not identify as a person with a disability	954	90.60%
Prefer not to say	36	3.40%
Marginalized populations Category I		
Marginalized / Female and/or POC and/or person with a disability ¹	660	67.80%
Not Marginalized	314	32.20%
Marginalized populations Category II		
Marginalized / POC and/or person with a disability ²	261	26.40%
Not Marginalized	727	73.60%

¹ All women-identifying respondents were included in this marginalized variable.

² Only women who identified as a person of color were included in this marginalized variable.