

Unemployment of professional artists: empirical evidence from Australia

Kamil Zawadzki

(draft 1.06.2014)

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of the determinants of practising professional artists' unemployment. A sample of five-year long career paths of 1030 Australian professional artists is analysed to determine the relationship between the probability of unemployment and an individual's artistic profession, level and form of education, origin and other demographic covariates. Moreover, attention is focussed on identification of factors influencing the long-term unemployment probability. It is found that young age, as well as mental or physical disability, are features strongly supporting the likelihood of having an unemployment episode. On the other hand, living with partner and participation in any form of formal training in an artistic profession, are associated with a lower probability of unemployment. The odds of having episodes of unemployment differ depending on the artistic occupation: community cultural development workers as well as actors and directors are most likely to experience unemployment, while musicians and craftspeople are the least likely. There is also evidence that among artists who were unemployed, being a writer or visual artist increases the odds of experiencing long-term unemployment. Gender, living place and origin of an artist do not appear to affect the risk of experiencing either long-term or short-term unemployment.

Keywords: professional artists, unemployment determinants, odds ratio.

JEL Classification: J64, Z11

K. Zawadzki
Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland
e-mail: kamzaw@umk.pl

1. Introduction

The economic literature concerning issues of the work of artists is already quite rich. Many national and international level research on that topic have been carried out for last dozen years in USA (NEA 2009; Lingo & Tepper 2013) and in Western Europe (EAEA 2001; Eurostat 2007; Menger 1999, 2001; Benhamou 2000; Comunian, Faggian & Jewell 2011). The subject of creative workers' potential and artists' labour market has been gradually developed also in Eastern Europe over the last decade (Primorac 2006; Ilczuk 2013; Zawadzki 2010, 2012).

Australia is undoubtedly one of the world leader in creative economy research. Investigations on artists' work have been carried out for many years, mostly in Sydney at Macquarie University (Throsby, Zednik 2007, 2011; Throsby, Hollister 2003) and in Brisbane in ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation (Bridgstock 2011; Higgs & Cunningham 2008). However, neither in Australia nor in Europe the question of professional artists from the prospect of the unemployment risk and its determinants has not been yet the subject of academic analysis. This paper tries to fill to some extent this gap. The main research goal is to analyze the five-year-long periods of labour market activity of 1030 Australian professional artists, to determine the relationship between the probability of unemployment (including long-term unemployment) and an individual's artistic profession, level and form of education, artist's origin and other demographic covariates.

A following hypothesis was formulated: despite the fact that practicing professional artists are a very narrow group comparing to other related notions as 'creative class' (Florida 2002) or 'cultural and creative industries workers' (DCMS 1998), they form a heterogeneous community as regards the exposure on the risk of unemployment and long-term unemployment. It was assumed that artists' labour market is a special kind of labour market, where both, the individual features of any particular artist (for instance the experience or position as an artist on the market, which are often correlated with age), as well as a specificity of the very artistic discipline, can differentiate significantly the discontinuity of employment and the risk of long term unemployment. Besides, in case of artists there are also some unobservable determinants of labour market success or failure, as talent or motivation for working primarily in the artistic discipline, which differentiate even more this population.

2. Data

The dataset used for the analysis comes from a survey of Australian professional artists carried out by David Throsby and Anita Zednik in 2009 (Throsby & Zednik 2010, 2011). This survey was concerned with practising professional artists, who assess themselves as persons committed to artistic work as a major aspect of their working life. The respondents decided, which criterion – work time, income, job satisfaction, etc. – is sufficient to be qualified as ‘serious artist’. All of respondents at the moment of survey were expected to be engaged in artistic work or being sought such work. ‘Professionalism’ of artistic work could have meant a relevant degree of training, experience or a manner of working. Respondents for the survey have been randomly chosen from sample frame of artists with more than 35,000 individuals (which is ca 80% of the entire population of professional artists in Australia). Every respondent has been classified to one of artistic occupation (PAO): writer, visual artist, craft practitioner, actor and director, dancer and choreographer, musician (instrumentalist and singer), composer and community cultural development worker.

3. Characteristics of the samples

3.1. Part I – Unemployed artists (UA)

In this subpopulation there are artists, who positively responded question: *Within the last 5 years, that is, since 2004, have you been unemployed, not including periods of training or education?* Almost three hundred individuals (that is 28.8% of all artists population in the survey) answered *Yes*. Let us label them „the unemployed artists”, remembering however that in this group not everybody was actually unemployed at the moment of questioning. The duration of unemployment period was not limited within the time since 2004 to 2008. Number of unemployed women slightly exceeded number of unemployed men in this sample, similarly as in the whole artists sample. Among unemployed artists the percentage of the youngest is higher than in general population: they are one fifth of UA sample, and 13.2% of general sample. In UA sample there was a smaller share of married or living with partner, comparing to the general sample (55.6% and 65.5% respectively). This resulted probably in a smaller share of respondents with a dependent child among UA than in the general group. Structures of UA sample and general sample were similar, regarding country of birth and a mother tongue. Surprisingly, among UA relatively more respondents have a tertiary level of education

(68.7% in UA and 65.1% in general sample). By one third the share of disabled in UA exceeded this percentage among individuals in general sample. Clearly appeared that the UA sample and general sample are different in a matter of formal professional artists' occupation (PAO) training. The large disproportion one can notice between shares of formally educated actors or directors and musicians or singers: while in UA sample there are relatively more actors or directors, in general sample – relatively more musicians or singers. Shares of formally educated dancers or choreographers, and visual artists in both samples are comparable: ca 9% of the first and about 20% of the latter. Share of composers and craft practitioners were lower in UA sample.

Interestingly enough, among UA subpopulation more individuals (8.2 percentage points) said that they have ever been seriously engaged during their career in more than one type of artistic work (here such individuals are called: multi-talented artist).

Three out of four UA live in a capital city, comparing to 68.8% in general sample. Structure of living place (Australian states) is very similar in both subpopulations. Only among UA there is larger share of citizens of New South Wales and South Australia.

A detailed description of a subpopulation of UA is presented in Table A (Appendix).

3.2. Part II – long term unemployed (LTU)

The most common definition of the long term unemployed says that it is a person looking for a job and without paid work for a period of 365 days or more. However, there were only 77 artists (that is 7.5% of the general sample), who had at least one episode of **consecutive** unemployment lasting one year or more, over five years preceding the survey. That is why a broader definition was used in that analysis. So here, a long term unemployed is an individual, who in the relevant period (2004-2008) was without work for at least 365 days **in total**. According to this broader definition the long term unemployed sample (the LTU12 sample) consists of 147 individuals (that is 14.3% of the general sample). More than a half of them (56.5%) declared total unemployment duration longer than 24 months (the LTU24 subsample).

A structure of the LTU12 sample by sex was analogous to general sample of artists. The youngest fraction of LTU sample (below 30) was a bit larger than in general sample (17%).

Percentages of artists born in Australia, as well as those speaking English as their mother tongue, are quite similar in LTU12 and in general sample. On the contrary, the family situation of these two groups is slightly different: smaller share of LTU is married or living with a partner, but relatively more of them have a dependent child.

The share of well-educated artists (tertiary level) and those, who had any form of formal training in their artistic discipline, is similar in LTU12 and in general sample. Structures of both samples by the main artistic discipline are also alike; there are some differences only as regards visual artists (the share of them is by one fourth higher in LTU than in general sample) and musicians and singers (only 5.4% in LTU and 16.0% in general sample).

Multi-talent artists, as well as disabled artist, are a bigger part of LTU than in general sample.

Artists in LTU and UA samples more often live in a capital city (72.1%) comparing to the general sample. Differences as regards Australian state they live in, are more visible.

Details of the structure of the general sample, LTU and UA are presented in Appendix, Table A.

4. Empirical models

4.1. Specification

In the analysis three the binary logit models are used. In Model I the dependent variable is the probability of experiencing one or more episodes of unemployment during the five years before the survey (2004-2008). Next, in Model II significant variables having impact on the probability of one-year long-term unemployment (sum of episodes equals 365 days or more) are sought, but only among those of artists, who had at least one episode of unemployment. In Model III, in turn, the long term unemployment criterion is stricter, and dependent variable reflects probability of being the two-year long-term unemployed (sum of episodes equals 730 days or more). All three models use the same set of 13 explanatory variables, such as: gender, age, education level, marital status, dependent child, disability, birth place, mother tongue, type of living place, a state where a respondent lives, numbers of artistic professions a respondent had ever been seriously engaged in, kind of training in artistic profession and the

main kind of his or her artistic profession (PAO). All independent variables are re-coded into dummies. Details of the explanatory variables are presented in Appendix, table A.

4.2. Estimation and results

To estimate coefficients of the models, the maximum likelihood method has been used. Collective results are presented in Table 1 below, and details of the estimates – in Appendix, Table B, C and D. To interpret the influence of significant variables on the dependent variables the odds ratio (e^{β}) is used.

Table 1. Significant determinants of the probability of: any unemployment episode (Model I), unemployment episodes lasting in total 12 months or more (Model II) and unemployment episodes lasting in total 24 months or more (Model III)

Variable	Model I P=1, sumUn>0 P=0, sumUn=0	Model II P=1, sumUn≥12 P=0, sumUn (0-12)	Model III P=1, sumUn≥24 P=0, sumUn (0-24)
age below 30	positive ***	ns.	negative ***
married & relationship	negative **	ns.	ns.
Disabled	positive **	ns.	ns.
tertiary education	positive **	negative **	negative **
dependent child	ns.	positive **	ns.
formal training PAO	negative ***	ns.	ns.
multi-talented	positive ***	ns.	ns.
stateWA	ns.	ns.	negative *
stateVIC	ns.	ns.	negative ***
stateNSW	ns.	ns.	negative ***
Writers	negative ***	ns.	positive ***
Craft practitioners	negative ***	ns.	ns.
Visual artists	negative ***	positive **	positive ***
Composers	negative ***	ns.	positive *
Dancers & choreographers	negative ***	ns.	ns.
Actors & directors	ns.	ns.	positive ***
Musicians & singers	negative ***	negative *	ns.

*** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$; ns. non-significant

Determinants of practicing professional artists' unemployment (Model I)

After estimation it appeared that: age, marital status, disability, level of education, profession, numbers of artistic occupations a respondent had ever been seriously as well as current dominant artistic profession (PAO) are the significant factors influencing the probability of unemployment episode (table 1). The youngest artist (below 30 years of age) are unemployed by over 80% more likely than the other. The married or living in relationship experience unemployment over 30% more likely than the other. Disability significantly raises the risk of unemployment among artists (they are unemployed over 70% more likely). Interestingly, tertiary education and changing artistic disciplines

(multi-talented artists) are associated with higher risk of unemployment episode. On the other hand, any formal training in PAO reduces the risk immensely (almost by 40%). The risk of unemployment is strongly diversified regarding the main artistic discipline. Only between Community cultural development workers and Actors & directors there is no significant difference in probability of unemployment episode. All other groups of PAO are in a better situation, but also not at the same level: relatively the lowest risk of unemployment appears among craftspeople, than among musicians (all kind: instrumentalists, vocalists and composers), than in order among writers and dancers or choreographers. Visual artists are relatively the most exposed on the risk of any unemployment episode, but still less than reference groups. Factors as: caring a dependent child, country of birth, mother tongue, living in a capital city and the state a respondent lives in, proved to be non-significant.

Determinants of long term unemployment – total duration: 12 months or more (Model II)

The highest level of education, dependent children and the state are the significant determinants of the probability of episodes of unemployment lasting totally at least one year among those artists, who over last 5 years before the survey had any unemployment episode. Artistic profession is a factor that does not differentiate to a considerable degree the long term unemployment risk. Visual artists are more likely, and musicians (vocalists and instrumentalists) less likely at risk of long term unemployment (min. 12 months), comparing to the other PAO and *ceteris paribus*. Tertiary education considerably reduces the long term unemployment risk (by over 40%) among artists who experienced at least one unemployment episode, but caring a dependent child raises it by 2/3.

Age, marital status, disability, formal education in PAO, changing the artistic profession, country of birth, mother tongue and living in a capital city appeared to be non-significant in this model.

Determinants of long term unemployment – total duration: 24 months or more (Model III)

The set of significant variables influencing the long term unemployment lasting in total two years or more differs from those in Model II. Here it is age and maximal education level that have significant impact: young artists are 2/3 less likely to be unemployed for 24 months or more, than the other; and the highly educated – almost a half less likely than unemployed artists with lower level of education. In contrast with the previous models, in Model III living place appeared to be significant in case of three Australian states: Western Australia, Victoria and New Southern Wales. Writers, visual artists,

composers, actors & directors are the PAO that significantly raise the risk of long term unemployment lasting in total two years or more, among the artists who experienced any unemployment.

Marital status, disability, dependent child, formal training in PAO, being multi-talented, mother tongue as well as country of birth proved to be non-significant.

Conclusions

The analyses prove the heterogeneity of professional artists as regards the exposure to unemployment risk in general, and to long term unemployment in particular. Moreover, it is shown that there are different sets of significant factors that have impact on risk of experiencing any episode of unemployment, in comparison with experiencing the long term unemployment.

The specificity of the labour market and the very work can explain the findings that craftspeople and musicians – both can be relatively independent as workers – appear to be the least threatened with unemployment. Those, who are much more dependent on the demand for their work and on their employers – that is: actors, directors, dancers, choreographers and – maybe to smaller extent – visual artists, are more likely to suffer from involuntary (most often) long term unemployment.

Quite intriguing is a finding that well-educated artists (tertiary) are unemployed more likely than the other. One can assume, however, that their unemployment in great measure is a frictional one, so – to some extent – voluntary, because on the other hand the tertiary education significantly reduces risk of the long term unemployment. Similarly, the artists who are during their career seriously engaged in more than one artistic profession are more likely to be unemployed (changing the job, probably), but not long term unemployed.

Also an interesting finding regards lack of influence of the state an artist live in on the risk of unemployment episodes, and simultaneously a significant impact on long term unemployment (LTU24) in three states: New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. These states represents the largest artists' labour markets in Australia, with their creative capitals: Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

Notable volatility of employment one can observe as regards the youngest artists. Episodes of unemployment appear more likely than among 30+, but there is no risk of prolonging them to the long term unemployment, which could be more dangerous (social exclusion, human capital depreciation).

Acknowledgements

This research has been carried on at Macquarie University in Sydney as a part of the program Mobilnosc Plus, ref. no 952/1/MOB/12/2013/0, funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The data used for this analysis derived from a research project funded by the Australia Council for the Arts. I would like to thank to Professor David Throsby from Macquarie University in Sydney for his assistance and sharing the data.

Appendix

Table A. Structure of the samples of all artists, artists who experienced an unemployment episode and artists who experienced unemployment episodes lasting one year or more in total

Variant of the variable	All artists N=1030	Unemployed Artists N=297	Long term (sum min. 12 months) unemployed artists N=147
	Share of the positive variant („1”) of the variable		
Gender: male	46.9	45.5	46.9
Age01: below 30	13.2	21.5	17.0
birtAus: born in Australia	77.7	78.5	76.2
married: married or living with partner	65.5	55.6	59.2
Child: any dependent children	35.3	32.3	38.1
firstEn: English is the first language	92.0	91.9	91.2
eduTERT: tertiary education level	65.1	68.7	64.6
formalTrPAO: any form of formal PAO training	77.4	76.4	76.9
PAOwrit: writer	16.0	13.1	13.6
PAOcraft:craft practitioner	8.4	4.4	3.4
PAOvisual: visual artist	20.6	20.2	25.9
PAOcomp: composer	9.0	6.4	7.5
PAOactdir: actor or director	17.7	30.6	29.9
PAOdanchor: dancer or choreographer	8.7	9.4	9.5
PAOmussing: musician or singer	16.0	9.1	5.4
PAOccd: community cultural development worker	3.5	6.7	4.8
multiTAL: multi-talented artist	48.0	56.2	52.4
Disab: physical or mental disability or illness	8.6	11.4	13.6
livCap: place of living – capital city	68.8	74.4	72.1
stateVIC: lives in Victoria	27.0	28.3	23.8
stateNSW: lives in New South Wales	30.8	33.4	33.3
stateQLD: lives in Queensland	11.8	8.4	8.8
stateSA: lives in South Australia	10.7	12.1	13.6
stateWA: lives in Western Australia	10.5	10.1	10.9
stateTAS: lives in Tasmania	4.7	4.0	4.8
stateNT: lives in Northern Territory	1.6	2.7	3.4
stateACT: lives in Australian Capital Territory	3.0	1.0	1.4

Table B.

Estimation results: logit model of the probability that an artist experiences an unemployment episode (N=1030)

Parameter Estimates									
Unempl		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
unemployment episode	Intercept	-.023	.253	.008	1	.929			
	age01	.607	.218	7.759	1	.005	1.835	1.197	2.812
	eduTERT	.349	.165	4.496	1	.034	1.418	1.027	1.957
	formalTrPAO	-.496	.192	6.655	1	.010	.609	.418	.888
	multiTal	.442	.152	8.464	1	.004	1.556	1.155	2.097
	PAOwrit	-1.089	.243	20.129	1	.000	.337	.209	.542
	PAOcrafft	-1.618	.337	23.119	1	.000	.198	.102	.383
	PAOvisual	-.768	.216	12.592	1	.000	.464	.304	.709
	PAOcomp	-1.353	.300	20.318	1	.000	.259	.144	.466
	PAOdanchor	-.911	.274	11.052	1	.001	.402	.235	.688
	PAOmussing	-1.588	.257	38.171	1	.000	.204	.124	.338
	disab	.537	.244	4.844	1	.028	1.711	1.061	2.760
	married	-.373	.159	5.481	1	.019	.689	.504	.941

Cox and Snell .105
 Nagelkerke .150
 McFadden .092

Model	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	542.779			
Final	429.002	113.777	12	.000

Classification

Observed	Predicted		
	no¬ sure	unemployment episode	Percent Correct
no¬ sure	680	53	92.8%
unemployment episode	233	64	21.5%
Overall Percentage	88.6%	11.4%	72.2%

Hit quotient = 3.5

Table C.

Estimation results: logit model of the probability that an artist experiences unemployment episodes lasting in total one year or more (N=297)

Parameter Estimates									
		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
q12b_sum12andMore								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
period of being unemployed within the last 5 years 1 year or more	Intercept	.126	.238	.279	1	.597			
	eduTERT	-.531	.263	4.090	1	.043	.588	.351	.984
	PAOvisual	.658	.307	4.596	1	.032	1.932	1.058	3.526
	child	.507	.257	3.896	1	.048	1.660	1.004	2.745
	PAOmussing	-.869	.452	3.689	1	.055	.419	.173	1.018

Cox and Snell .056
 Nagelkerke .074
 McFadden .041

Model	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	58.527			
Final	41.459	17.068	4	.002

classification			
Observed	Predicted		
	period of being unemployed shorter than 1 year within last 5 years	period of being unemployed for 1 year or more within last 5 years	Percent Correct
period of being unemployed for shorter than 1 year within last 5 years	80	70	53.3%
period of being unemployed for 1 year or more within last 5 years	44	103	70.1%
Overall Percentage	41.8%	58.2%	61.6%

Hit quotient = 2.7

Table D.

Estimation results: logit model of the probability that an artist experiences unemployment episodes lasting in total two years or more (N=297)

Parameter Estimates									
		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
q12b_sum24andMore								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
periods of being unemployed for 2 years or more within last 5 years	Intercept	-.467	.394	1.407	1	.236			
	stateVIC	-1.487	.406	13.427	1	.000	.226	.102	.501
	stateNSW	-1.068	.352	9.228	1	.002	.344	.173	.685
	stateWA	-.904	.501	3.260	1	.071	.405	.152	1.080
	age01	-1.105	.411	7.240	1	.007	.331	.148	.741
	eduTERT	-.655	.297	4.870	1	.027	.520	.291	.929
	PAOwrit	1.350	.474	8.118	1	.004	3.857	1.524	9.763
	PAOvisual	1.407	.434	10.489	1	.001	4.082	1.743	9.562
	PAOcomp	1.111	.591	3.527	1	.060	3.036	.953	9.677
PAOactdir	1.144	.420	7.411	1	.006	3.139	1.378	7.154	

Cox and Snell .140
 Nagelkerke .201
 McFadden .127

Model	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	166.788			
Final	122.118	44.670	9	.000

Observed	Predicted		
	period of being unemployed for shorter than 2 years within last 5 years	period of being unemployed 2 years or more within last 5 years	Percent Correct
period of being unemployed for shorter than 2 years within last 5 years	196	18	91.6%
period of being unemployed for 2 years or more within last 5 years	59	24	28.9%
Overall Percentage	85.9%	14.1%	74.1%

Hit quotient = 4.4

References

- Bridgstock, R. (2011), Skills for creative industries graduate success, *Education + Training*, Vol. 53, No. 1.
- Comunian, R. , Faggian, A. & Jewell, S. (2011), Winning and losing in the creative industries: an analysis of creative graduates' career opportunities across creative disciplines, *Cultural Trends*, 20:3-4, DOI: 10.1080/09548963.2011.589710.
- DCMS & Creative Industries Task Force (1998), *Creative Industries 1998: Mapping Documents*, London: UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- EAEA (2001), Study relating to the various regimes of employment and social protection of cultural workers in the EU.
- Eurostat (2007), *Cultural Statistics*, European Communities, Luxemburg.
- Florida, R. (2002): *The Flight of the Creative Class. The New Global Competition for Talent*, Harper Business, New York.
- Higgs, P., Stuart Cunningham (2008): *Creative Industries Mapping: Where have we come from and where are we doing?*, *Creative Industries Journal*, vol. 1, pp 7-30.
- Ilczuk, D. (2013), *Rynek pracy artystów i twórców w Polsce. Raport z badań*, WSG – Fundacja Pro Cultura, Bydgoszcz – Warszawa.
- Lingo, E. & Tepper, S. (2013), *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Arts-Based Careers and Creative Work*, *Work and Occupations*, 40: 337.
- Menger, P. M. (1999), *Artistic labour markets and careers*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25: 541–574.
- Menger, P. (2001), *Artists as workers: Theoretical and methodological challenges*, *Poetics*, 28.
- NEA (2009), *Artists in a Year of Recession: Impact on Jobs in 2008*, *NEA Research Note #97*, <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/97.pdf>.
- Primorac, J. (2006), *The position of cultural workers in the south-eastern European perspective*, Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation.
- Throsby, D. and Virginia Hollister (2003): *Don't give up your day job yet; An economic study of professional artists in Australia*, Australia Council Sydney
- Throsby, D. and A. Zednik (2007): *Employment and Output for the Cultural Industries*, *Macquarie Economics Research Papers*, 5: 1–27.
- Throsby, D. & Zednik, A. (2011), *Multiple job-holding and artistic careers: some empirical evidence*, *Cultural Trends*, 20(1): 9-24.
- Zawadzki, K. (2010), *Kreatywni pracownicy w sektorach nowej gospodarki*, *Studia i Prace Kolegium Zarządzania i Finansów SGH*, Zeszyt Naukowy no 99, pp. 241-249.
- Zawadzki, K. (2012), *Potencjał zatrudnieniowy przemysłów kreatywnych w Polsce*, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach „Studia Ekonomiczne”* pt. „Mikro i makroekonomiczne aspekty rynku pracy w Polsce”, no 111, pp. 141–152.