



TEACHING ARTISTS SPEAK!  
CREATIVE AGING FROM THE  
TEACHING ARTIST PERSPECTIVE

# TEACHING ARTISTS SPEAK!

## CREATIVE AGING FROM THE TEACHING ARTIST PERSPECTIVE

Author: Lifetime Arts, Inc.

Cover Image: Teaching artists, Celia Caro and Paul Ferrara, providing instruction to older adult participants during “Life Maps”; a Creative Aging program in collage at the Countee Cullen branch of the New York Public Library.  
Photo Credit: Herb Scher

October 2016

### ABOUT LIFETIME ARTS

Founded in 2008 as an arts service organization, Lifetime Arts is dedicated to improving the lives of older adults through arts education and is nationally recognized as a major contributor to the development of Creative Aging policies, best practices, training resources, technical assistance, and advocacy. [www.lifetimearts.org](http://www.lifetimearts.org)

### SPECIAL THANKS

Lifetime Arts would like to thank Eric Booth, Heather Ikemire, Katie Rainey and the National Guild for Community Arts Education for their partnership in the development and dissemination of this survey.

Additional support from **Aroha Philanthropies’** Vitality and Art 55+ Arts Fund, the National Guild for Community Arts Education and New York State Council on the Arts.



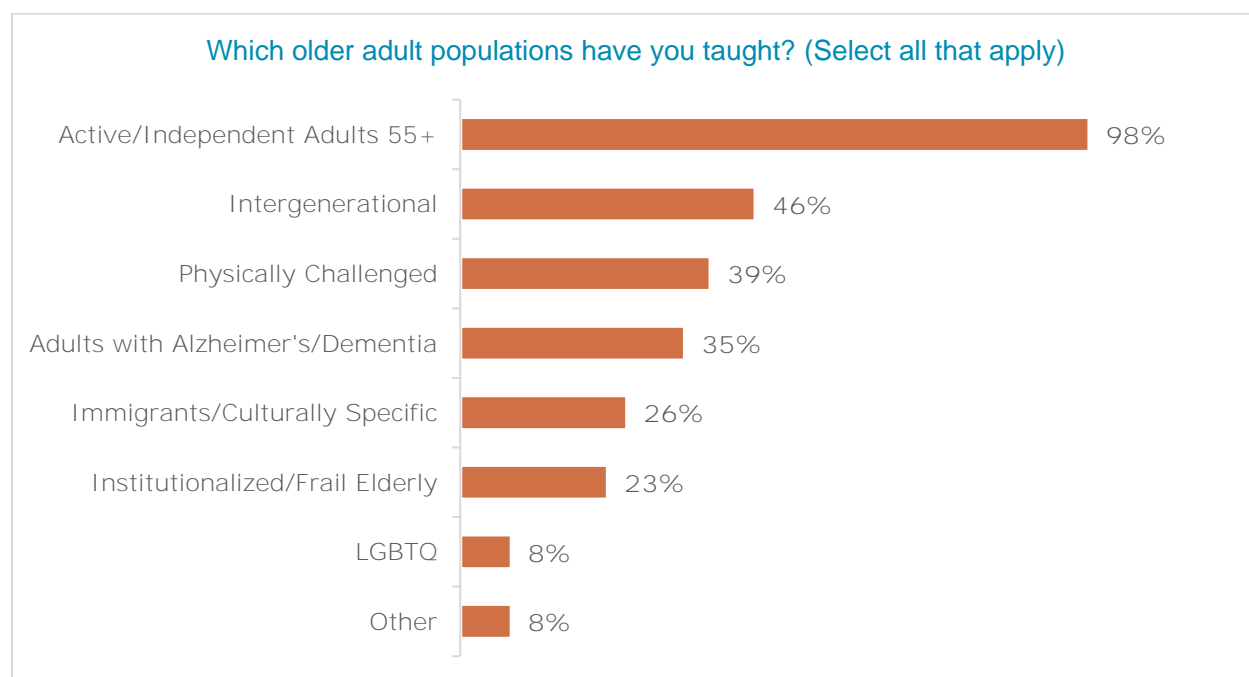
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a service to the emerging field of Creative Aging, Lifetime Arts conducted a series of national surveys to investigate and disseminate a more complete picture of programming and teaching artist training in the field. We sought to uncover successful models; identify the gaps in service; and help to set an agenda to establish best practices, funding priorities, and broad access. This survey, the third in the series, was conducted between March and May 2016 and gathered information from individual teaching artists (TAs.) The survey will help inform Creative Aging stakeholders about training and professional development needs, hiring practices, wages and other areas of interest in the field.

The survey was distributed by [Lifetime Arts](#), [National Guild for Community Arts Education](#), [Teaching Artists Guild](#), [Community-Word Project](#), [Association of Teaching Artists](#), many teaching artists and arts/cultural organizations. In total, 201 responses were received from teaching artists in 23 U.S. states. As well as, two responses from Canada and Pakistan.

## RESULTS

The survey showed that the overwhelming majority (96%) of respondents are interested in teaching art to older adults. The most significant challenges reported were lack of employment information and opportunities, inadequate and unstandardized compensation, and location of programs (i.e. proximity or ease of commuting to the location.) The survey also revealed that 88% of respondents already have experience working with older adults. When asked which groups those respondents have experience teaching, the survey showed that active, independent older adults were the largest group served (98%), followed by intergenerational groups (46%) and older adults with physical challenges (39%).





A majority of respondents reported being hired or engaged most often by arts or cultural organizations, and senior services organizations. One third of teaching artists reported being self-employed and most frequently finding work as independent contractors.

Reported pay scales vary widely from volunteer to over \$150 an hour, with a majority of respondents earning between \$40 and \$70 an hour. Of these, only 17% report always being compensated for class planning and preparation. Two thirds of respondents have never received professional development or training in working with older adults.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

---

- Establish a regularly maintained, centralized directory of programs and employment opportunities to support stakeholders and bring greater awareness to the field of Creative Aging.
- Standardize and increase compensation for teaching artists and advocate for compensation for planning and preparation of classes.
- Provide regularly scheduled regional and national training opportunities for teaching artists in Creative Aging.
- Compensate teaching artists for participation in professional development/training.
- Increase the number of TAs of diverse backgrounds, including ethnicity, gender and age, working in Creative Aging.



*Older adult participants preparing for a public poetry reading to culminate a Creative Aging program held at the Mid-Manhattan Branch of the New York Public Library. The program was facilitated by teaching artist, Hermine Meinhard. Photo Credit: Herb Scher*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	i
Introduction .....	1
Goals and Objectives .....	1
Methodology .....	1
Key Findings .....	2
Recommendations.....	4
Appendix I: Respondent Profile .....	5
Appendix II: Survey Questions.....	8

## INTRODUCTION

Lifetime Arts was proud to distribute the first national survey for teaching artists in Creative Aging in February of this year. This survey was initiated at the 2015 National Guild for Community Arts Education Conference as part of the [Teaching Artist Development Track](#). With support from Aroha Philanthropies and input from a diverse group of teaching artists, we developed and published the survey. It was designed to gather feedback from teaching artists across the country about their experiences in teaching artistry and in Creative Aging.

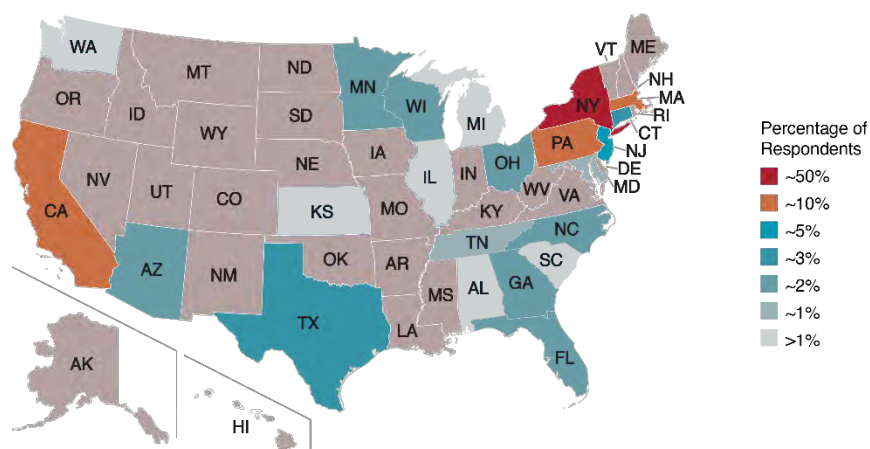
This survey is the last of three national surveys on Creative Aging that Lifetime Arts published this year. The first survey, "[Teaching Artist Training in Creative Aging](#)", gathered information from Creative Aging organizations. The second, "[Support for Creative Aging and Teaching Artist Training in State Arts Agencies](#)," showed the role that SAAs play in providing teaching artist training and program support in their own states.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

We sought to discover how Creative Aging fits into the careers of teaching artists (TAs) including what training they have working with older adults; what resources they need to teach Creative Aging programs and what challenges they face in the field of teaching artistry. We wanted to find out who most frequently contracts TAs to do this work and on average, how were they compensated for their time?

## METHODOLOGY

Via SurveyMonkey, Lifetime Arts and the National Guild for Community Arts Education disseminated the Survey to teaching artists nationwide, between February 11, 2016 and May 27, 2016. A total of 201 individual teaching artists responded, representing 23 states in the United States and 2 international countries (Canada and Pakistan.)



## KEY FINDINGS

Although there is widespread interest among teaching artists to work with active older adults (96%), information on employment and opportunities for work are lagging behind.

*I've had the good fortune of having fairly steady work over the past five years at one continuous care community, but even they are experiencing major budget cuts in programming. I hope the field continues to grow and that adult institutions come to value the worth arts programming has on the quality of life for their residents.*

*-Shelley Benaroya, Teaching Artist*

TAs are most frequently employed for Creative Aging work by arts and culture organizations and senior service organizations and often are self-contracting through these organizations.

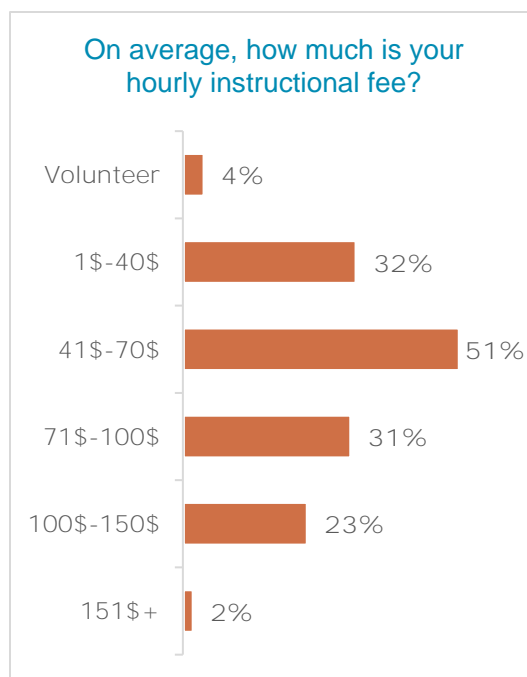
Rates of pay vary widely across the country and even locally, possibly due to teaching artists being self-employed (50%) and creating their own pay scale with little training or guidance. Large pay rate differences may be due to TAs being paid for their class planning and preparation. We found that 83% of TAs, never or rarely, get paid for their class planning and prep.

In order to be prepared to work with older adults 66% of TAs reported needing guidance in partnership development (for example, connecting individual teaching artists with community organizations.) TAs also reported needing help in promotion/recruitment of programs (55%) and information about proper contracting and payment protocols (49%.) Furthermore, TAs reported needing staff support from host organizations, networking opportunities with other TAs, employment information and online resources to continue to work in Creative Aging.

Teaching Artists work in a variety of diverse communities and settings and often have an open mind to what their students can accomplish.

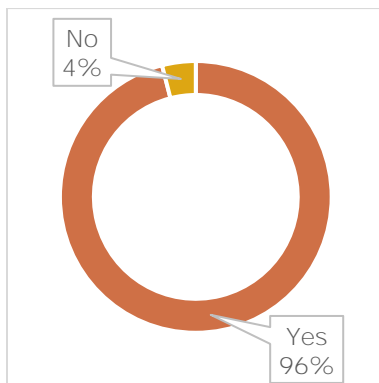
*I have been amazed, over and over again, at the deep well of creativity that lives inside all the older adult learners who have attended my creative writing workshop. Though many of them have told me they "like to write," I love to see them surpass their own expectations, surmounting their fears to produce beautiful work that rises out of years of lived experience.*

*-Debka Colson, Teaching Artist*

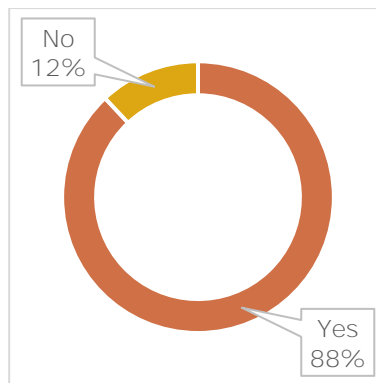


In an effort to understand how ageism (prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a person's age) influenced the respondents, we asked them to rank a series of statements – keeping in mind that a majority of respondents work with older adults (88%.) We found most respondents denied stereotypes that older adults are stubborn and resistant to learning new things. However, most agreed that to some extent older adults have trouble learning and remembering new things. In fact, studies have shown the opposite to be true. As stated in the article [Creativity Matters: Arts and Aging in America](#) by Gay Hanna and Susan Perlstein (2008), “New brain research rebuts the old idea that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. The truth is that we are never too old to learn new skills. In fact, as we age our ability to handle complexity increases because of the proliferation of dendrites, “connections between neurons,” in our brains.”

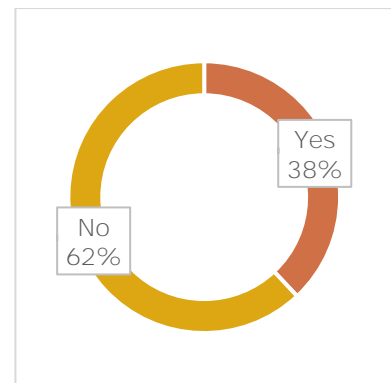
Are you interested in teaching art to older adults?



Do you have experience teaching instructional arts program to older adults?



Have you ever received professional dev. or training on working with older adults?



Ageism is not the only silent barrier that is between teaching artists and community members they serve. While a majority of communities in need of programming are ethnically diverse, the majority of teaching artists working in Creative Aging, as in the field of teaching artistry as a whole, are primarily Caucasian and female. The majority of respondents to this survey were Caucasian (69%) and female (80%.) For a more in depth profile of the respondents, see Appendix I.



*Teaching artist, Celia Caro (center), instructing participants during a Creative Aging program at the Bronx Library Center of the New York Public Library Public Library. Photo Credit: Herb Scher*



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Information on Creative Aging programs are scattered and siloed amongst the various stakeholders, and employment opportunities for TAs are infrequent and inconsistent. A regularly maintained, centralized directory of programs and employment opportunities should be established to support stakeholders and bring greater awareness to the field of Creative Aging. While there are some directories and rosters, such as state arts councils' teaching artist rosters, there are still too many gaps from state to state. Existing Creative Aging program directories are outdated and not comprehensive.

Almost all the respondents who have taught Creative Aging programs reported that they have never received any type of training to work specifically with older adults. These TAs gained their skills working with older adults by adapting experiences working with other populations and through trial and error. Teaching artists that are interested in Creative Aging, and currently working in the field, would greatly benefit from routine professional development opportunities. Annual (or regularly scheduled, regional trainings for teaching artists in Creative Aging would help develop a properly prepared workforce to deliver effective programming. Furthermore, this should include the development of a standardized, multi-track curriculum that would lead to training certification in Creative Aging for teaching artists.

Arts programming for older adults is rapidly expanding, but ageism is a major barrier. It is rooted in all parts of this field (from passive programming to curricula that infantilizes the older adult participants.) Creative Aging training should address ageism and seek to rid stereotypes of aging and the older adult learner. In addition, best practices in marketing and universal design of programs should be included for all who seek to work in this field.

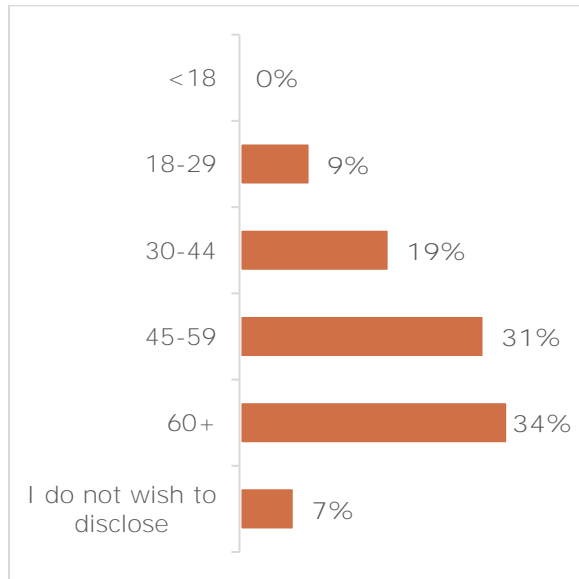
**Lastly, in an effort to rid barriers between TA's, organizations and participants, we must advocate for more TAs of all races, genders and ages. It is paramount to build a diverse pool of teaching artists to serve the incredibly diverse populations of older adults.**



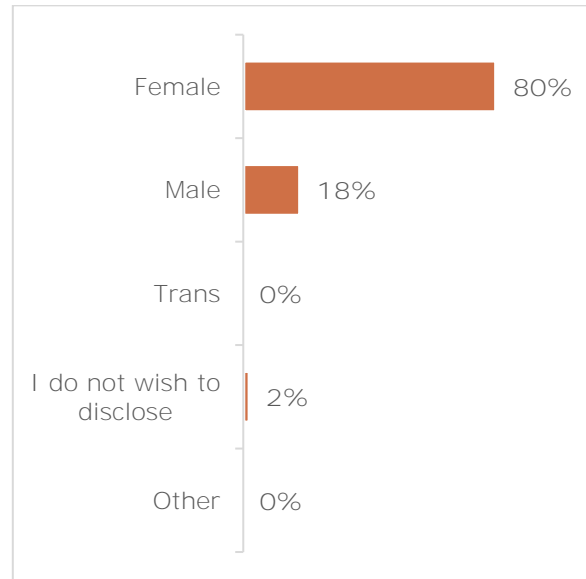
*Teaching artist, Consuela Buckley, leads older adult participants through dance and movement choreography that will later be performed during a public sharing at the Hampton-Illinois Branch of the Dallas Public Library.*

# APPENDIX I: RESPONDENT PROFILE

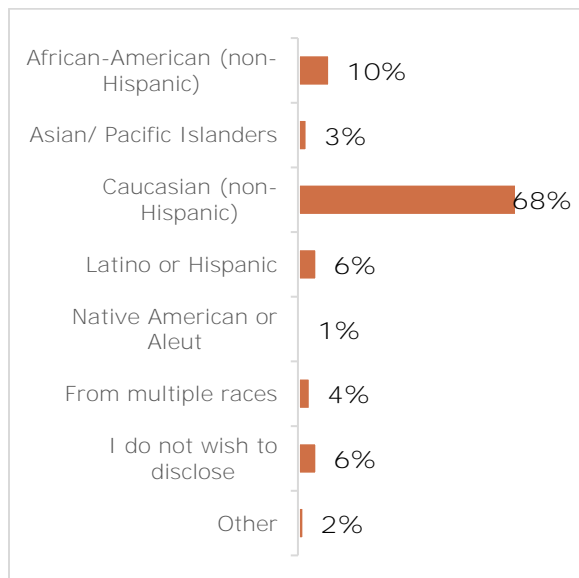
Ages



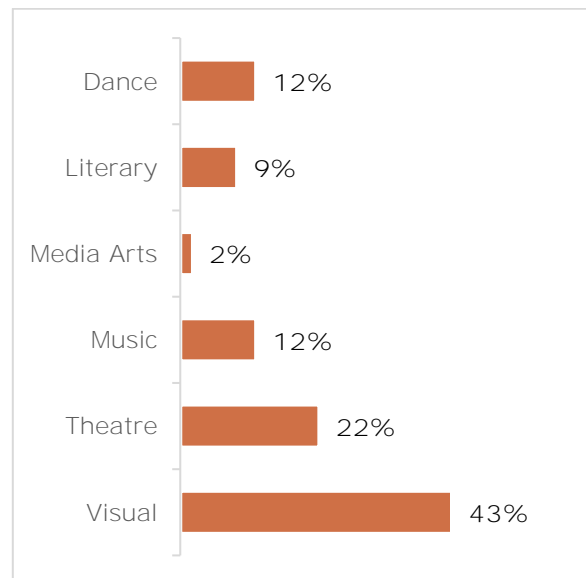
Genders



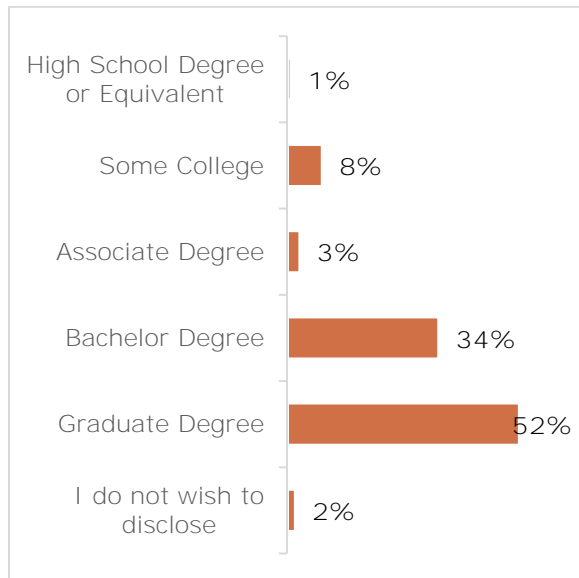
Racial or Ethnic Background



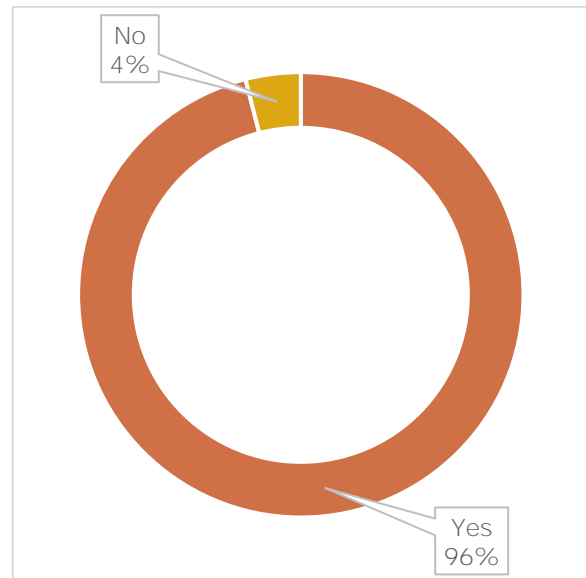
Primary Arts Disciplines



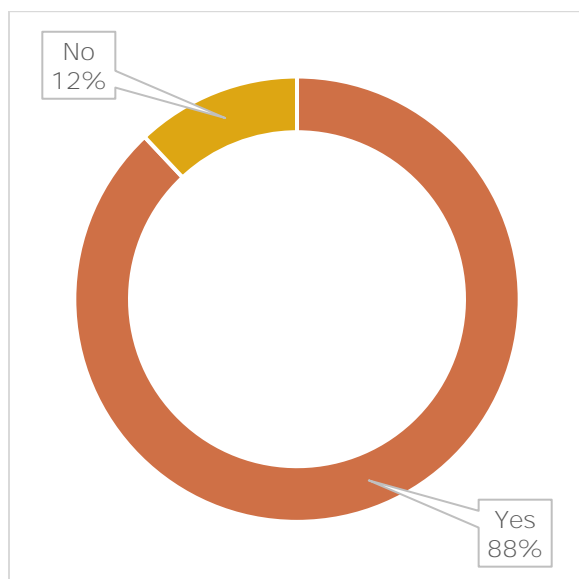
Education level



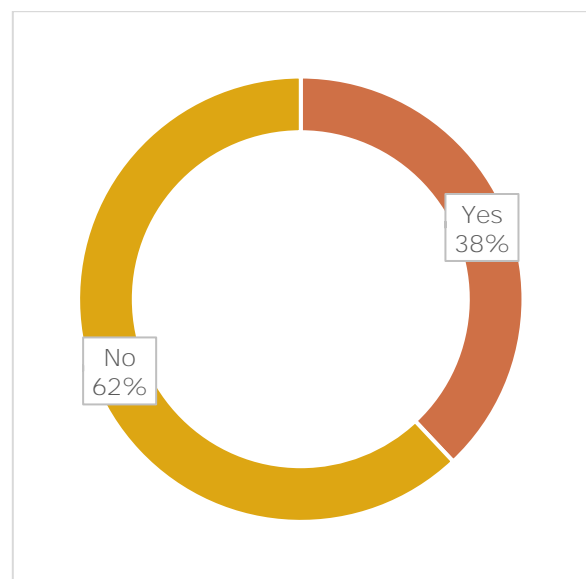
Interest in teaching older adults



Experience teaching older adults



Training to work with older adults



United States

- International

- 
- Percentage of Respondents
- ~50%
  - ~10%
  - ~5%
  - ~3%
  - ~2%
  - ~1%
  - >1%



## APPENDIX II: SURVEY QUESTIONS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

---

1. Contact Info
2. Would you like to take part in a follow up phone interview?
  - Yes
  - No
3. Location
4. Primary Artistic Discipline
  - Visual
  - Literary
  - Music
  - Dance
  - Theatre
  - Media Arts
5. Age
  - <18
  - 18 - 29
  - 30 - 44
  - 45 - 59
  - 60+
  - I do not wish to disclose
6. I identify my gender as...
  - Male
  - Female
  - Trans
  - I do not wish to disclose
  - Other
7. With which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?
  - African-American (non-Hispanic)
  - Asian/Pacific Islanders
  - Caucasian (non-Hispanic)
  - Latino or Hispanic
  - Native American or Aleut
  - From multiple races
  - I do not wish to disclose
  - Other

8. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
- Less than high school degree
  - High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
  - Some college but no degree
  - Associate degree
  - Bachelor degree
  - Graduate degree
  - I do not wish to disclose
9. Are you interested in teaching art to older adults?
- Yes
  - No

### **INTEREST IN WORKING WITH ADULTS 55+**

---

10. What are some challenges you anticipate when working with older adults?
- Teaching Opportunities
  - Location of workshop
  - Compensation
  - Resistance from participants
  - Un-Supportive Host Organization
  - Health of participants
11. What information do you need to be prepared to work with older adults?
- Access to Research
  - Project Planning
  - Partnership Development
  - Social Engagement Techniques
  - Intergenerational Best Practices
  - Combating Ageism
  - Differences between art therapy and art education.
  - Contracts/Payment Protocols
  - Promotion and Recruitment
12. What is your preference in receiving this information?
- Online
  - Live in person training
  - Phone
  - Webinars

## WORK EXPERIENCE

---

13. Do you have experience teaching older adults?

- Yes
- No

14. Who hired or engaged you to teach older adults?

- Arts or Cultural Organization
- Senior Service Organization (Senior Center, Adult Day Care, Senior Housing, etc.)
- Public Library
- Government Agency (Office of the Aging, Dept. of Education, Community Development, etc.)
- Arts Council
- Community Organization (YMCA, Rec Center, etc.)
- Medical Facility (Hospice, Hospital, Skilled Nursing Home, etc.)
- Faith Based
- Organization
- Self Employed
- Other (please specify)

15. In what settings have you taught \* older adults?

- Library
- Museum
- Senior Center
- Senior Housing
- Community Center
- Prison
- Shelter
- Art Center
- K-12 School
- Health or Wellness Facility
- Other (please specify)

16. Which older adult populations have you taught?

- Active/ Independent Adults 55+
- Adults with Alzheimer's / Dementia
- Intergenerational
- Institutionalized / Frail Elderly
- Physically Challenged
- Immigrants / Culturally Specific
- LGBTQ
- Other (please specify group)

17. Have you ever been mentored in teaching older adults?

- Yes
- No

18. On average, how much is your hourly instructional fee?

- Volunteer
- 1\$ to 25\$
- 26\$ to 40\$
- 41\$ to 55\$
- 56\$ to 70\$
- 71\$ to 85\$
- 86\$ to 100\$
- 100\$ to 125\$
- 126\$ to 150\$
- 151\$ or more

19. Do you get paid for class planning or preparation?

- Always
- Never
- Sometimes

20. Have you ever facilitated arts professional development (PD) or training?

- Yes
- No

21. If yes, have you facilitated arts PD or training for any of the following?

- Other Teaching Artists
- Host Organizations
- Arts Organization Staff / Members
- Librarians
- Volunteers
- Arts Education Organizations
- Other (please specify)

## LOOKING AHEAD

---

22. Which older adult populations are you interested in teaching?

- Active/ Independent Adults 55+
- Adults with Alzheimer's / Dementia
- Intergenerational
- Institutionalized / Frail / Elderly
- Physically Challenged
- Immigrants / Culturally Specific
- LGBTQ
- Other (please specify group)



23. What support do you need to do this work? (1 not needed, 3 somewhat needed, 5 needed)

- Access to research that supports the benefits of arts and aging.
- Introduction to services for older adults.
- Training or Mentorships
- Host Organization Staff Support
- Employment Information
- Online Resources
- Networking Opportunities

24. What would you need to participate in PD or training?

- Time Off From Work
- Compensation
- Subsidy
- Less than 50 miles from home
- Travel Reimbursement / Accommodations
- Online Training Only
- Certification

25. How much time annually would you dedicate to PD or training? (select all that apply)

- None
- 1/2 Day
- Full Day
- Multi Day
- Week
- Greater than 1 Week

26. When would be the best time of year for you to participate in PD or training?

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

## INVOLVEMENT

---

27. Are you associated with an organization that offers arts opportunities \* for older adults?

- Yes
- No

28. Have you ever received PD or training on working with older adults?

- Yes
- No

29. Is being a teaching artist an ongoing and significant part of your professional life?

- Yes
- No

30. Are you listed on any teaching artist rosters?

- Yes
- No

31. What percentage of your current students are 55+?

- 0%
- 1% to 24%
- 25% to 49%
- 50% to 74%
- 75% to 99 %
- 100%

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

---

32. Are you aware of any organizations that provide creative aging experiences for older adults in your community?

- Yes
- No

33. What are your assumptions about older adults? (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree)

- Older adults are cranky, and stubborn.
- Older adults have trouble learning and remembering new things.
- Older adults have health and medical issues that prevent them from participating in class.
- Older adults don't listen to younger people.
- Older adults don't live independently.