

New report reveals 10 key facts about the working lives of artists in Canada

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A Statistical Profile of Artists in Canada Based on the 2006 Census, the 26th report in the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series from Hill Strategies Research, shows that there are 140,000 artists in Canada who spent more time at their art than at any other occupation in May 2006. Artists include actors, authors, choreographers, craftspeople, composers, conductors, dancers, directors, musicians, producers, singers and visual artists.

The number of artists is slightly larger than the number of Canadians directly employed in the automotive industry (135,000).

The report also notes that the broader cultural sector has about 609,000 workers and comprises 3.3% of the overall labour force in Canada. One in every 30 people in Canada has a cultural occupation. This is about double the level of employment in the forestry sector in Canada (300,000) and more than double the level of employment in Canadian banks (257,000).

The report highlights 10 key facts about artists in Canada:

1. The average earnings of artists are very low.

- The average earnings of artists are \$22,700, compared with an average of \$36,300 for all Canadian workers.
- The gap between artists' average earnings and overall labour force earnings is 37%.
- To bridge the earnings gap and bring the average earnings of artists up to the same level as the overall labour force would require an additional \$1.9 billion in earnings for artists.
- The average earnings of artists are only 9% higher than Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff for a single person living in a community of 500,000 people or more (\$20,800).
- 62% of artists earn less than \$20,000, compared with 41% of the overall labour force.
- Six of the nine arts occupations have average earnings that are less than Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff for a single person living in a community of 500,000 people or more (\$20,800).

2. A typical artist in Canada earns less than half the typical earnings of all Canadian workers.

Note: The median is a measure of the earnings of a “typical” worker in various occupations. Half of individuals have earnings that are less than the median value, while the other half has earnings greater than the median.

- For artists, median earnings are only \$12,900.
- A typical artist in Canada earns less than half the typical earnings of all Canadian workers (median earnings of \$26,900).
- A typical artist, on their own, lives in a situation of extreme low income: the median earnings of artists are 38% below the low-income cutoff for larger urban areas (\$20,800).
- In six arts occupations, median earnings are less than or about equal to \$10,000. This means that a *typical* actor, artisan, dancer, musician or singer, other performer or visual artist earns only about \$10,000 or less.

3. Artists' earnings decreased, even before the current recession.

- Between 1990 and 2005, the average earnings of artists decreased by 11% (after adjusting for inflation).
- In the overall labour force, average earnings grew by 9% during the same timeframe (after adjusting for inflation).
- The 11% decrease in the average earnings of artists between 1990 and 2005 is due to a 14% decrease between 2000 and 2005, after adjusting for inflation. Even without an inflation adjustment, artists' average earnings decreased by 3% between 2000 and 2005.
- All nine arts occupations saw substantial decreases in average earnings between 2000 and 2005, which contributed to a decrease for all nine occupations over the longer timeframe (1990 to 2005).
- The earnings gap between artists and the overall labour force increased from 23% in 1990 to 37% in 2005.

4. There are more female than male artists, yet women artists earn much less than men.

- The 74,000 female artists represent 53% of artists. In the overall labour force, 48% of workers are women.
- On average, female artists earn \$19,200, 28% less than the average earnings of male artists (\$26,700).

5. Aboriginal and visible minority artists have particularly low earnings.

- Aboriginal artists have particularly low average earnings (\$15,900), a 39% gap when compared with all Aboriginal workers in the Canadian labour force. The average earnings of Aboriginal artists are 30% lower than the average for all artists.

- With average earnings of \$18,800, visible minority artists earn 38% less than the average earnings of all visible minority workers in Canada.

6. Economic returns to higher education are much lower for artists than for other workers.

- University-educated artists earn 38% more than artists with a high school education. In the overall labour force, those with a university education earn more than double the average earnings of those with a high school education.
- The percentage of artists with a bachelor's degree or higher (39%) is nearly double the rate in the overall labour force (21%).
- Artists with university credentials at or above the bachelor's level earn \$26,800, which is 53% less than the average earnings of workers with the same education in the overall labour force (\$57,500). In fact, the average earnings of university-educated artists (\$26,800) are less than the average earnings of overall labour force workers with a high school diploma (\$28,000).

7. Many artists are self-employed.

- At 42%, the percentage of artists who are self-employed is six times the self-employment rate in the overall labour force (7%).
- The average earnings of self-employed artists (\$15,200) are 51% less than the average earnings of all self-employed workers in Canada (\$31,000).

8. There are relatively few opportunities for full-time work in the arts.

- Nearly twice as many artists as other workers (42% vs. 22%) indicated that they worked part-time in 2005.
- Artists are employed for fewer weeks per year than other workers. In 2005, 68% of artists worked most of the year (40 to 52 weeks) compared with 77% of the overall labour force.

9. There has been substantial growth in the number of artists since 1971, but the rate of growth is decreasing.

- The number of artists in Canada grew much more quickly than the overall labour force between 1971 and 2006. There were three-and-a-half times as many artists in 2006 as in 1971. This is a much higher increase than the doubling of the overall labour force.
- The rate of growth in the number of artists has decreased during every period since 1971: 85% in the 1970s, 40% in the 1980s, 29% in the 1990s, and 7% in the shorter period of 2001 to 2006.
- The number of artists grew by much more than the overall labour force between 1971 and 2001 but less than the overall labour force between 2001 and 2006.

10. Artists, as a group, are becoming more diverse, older and better educated.

- Artists from visible minority groups more than doubled in number between 1991 and 2006 (123% growth).
- Artists 45 or older more than doubled in number between 1991 and 2006 (121% growth).
- There were 90% more artists with a university certificate, diploma or degree in 2006 than in 1991.
- There were 61% more artists with a college certificate or diploma in 2006 than in 1991.
- In comparison, there were 38% more artists and 22% more workers in the overall labour force in 2006 than in 1991.

Methodological notes

Individuals are classified in the occupation in which they worked the most hours between May 7 and 13, 2006 (the census reference week).

The earnings statistics include an individual's wages and salaries as well as net self-employment income. Other income sources, such as income from government programs, pensions or investments, are excluded from the earnings statistics. The earnings statistics include amounts received from all employment and self-employment positions in 2005, not just the position at which the respondent worked the most hours during the census reference week.

For more information

The full report, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ontario Arts Council, is available free of charge on the Hill Strategies Research website (<http://www.hillstrategies.com>) and the websites of the funding organizations.