

New report shows that as many artists live in Canada's small and rural municipalities as in Toronto and Montreal combined

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Artists in Small and Rural Municipalities in Canada, the 29th report in the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series from Hill Strategies Research, provides an analysis of artists residing in small and rural municipalities in Canada. "Small and rural" municipalities are defined as those municipalities with fewer than 50,000 residents.

As many artists as Toronto and Montreal combined

One-quarter of the 140,000 artists in Canada reside in small and rural municipalities (36,500 artists, or 26%). This is almost exactly the same number of artists that reside in the cities of Toronto and Montreal combined (35,700).

Visual artists and craftspeople are the artists who are most likely to reside in small and rural municipalities. Almost one-half of artisans and craftspersons (47%) reside in small and rural municipalities, while 35% of painters, sculptors and other visual artists do so.

Artists represent 0.54% of the combined local labour forces in small and rural municipalities in Canada, lower than the Canadian average of 0.77%.

Census data is available for the 261 small and rural municipalities with 40 or more artists. These 261 small and rural municipalities are home to 21,100 artists, representing 15% of all Canadian artists.

In addition to the municipalities mentioned in this summary (many of which are in Quebec, British Columbia or Nunavut), the full report contains interesting details about artists in municipalities such as Rocky View (Alberta), Corman Park and Yorkton in Saskatchewan, Steinbach (Manitoba), Niagara-on-the-Lake and Meaford in Ontario, Hampton (New Brunswick), Wolfville (Nova Scotia), as well as Portugal Cove-St. Philips and Corner Brook in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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.

West Bolton (Quebec), Cape Dorset (Nunavut), Denman and Hornby Islands (B.C.) top the list

West Bolton (in Quebec's Eastern Townships) is the only municipality in Canada with over 10% of its labour force in arts occupations. West Bolton's concentration of artists (10.47%) is over 13 times the Canadian average (0.77%) and more than four times the level in Vancouver, the large city with the highest concentration of artists (2.35%). The Eastern Township's *Tour des Arts*, a studio tour, "is set amidst some of the Eastern Townships' most spectacular backroads countryside -- the hills and valleys around Brome, Sutton, Bolton, and Mansonville.... the *Tour des Arts* is the oldest of the Townships' regional arts tours [established in 1988], and features stops at studios and workshops of forty of the region's most talented artists and artisans."¹

Cape Dorset, Nunavut, is the second-ranked municipality (9.47% of its labour force in arts occupations). According to Cape Dorset's website, carving and printmaking are major economic activities in the municipality that calls itself the "Inuit Art Capital of Canada".² Two well-known Cape Dorset visual artists are Kenojuak Ashevak (a recipient of the Order of Canada whose best-known works are prints and drawings) and carver Ohito Ashoona (recipient of the 2002 National Aboriginal Achievement Award for arts and culture).

The third-ranked municipality is Comox-Strathcona K, a Regional District Electoral Area encompassing Denman and Hornby Islands in British Columbia (9.17% of its labour force in arts occupations). Just off the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, the islands are known to both tourists and residents for their strong artistic communities. According to RealHornby.com, "Hornby Island has a diverse and talented community of artists, many who have committed a lifetime to their craft."³ DenmanIsland.com indicates that "Denman residents produce an abundance of unique arts & crafts and have helped the small Gulf Island earn an esteemed reputation around the world."⁴ The islands have a number of music events and festivals, as well as the Denman Island Arts Centre.

As shown in Figure 1, of the ten small and rural municipalities with the highest concentration of artists, six are in British Columbia, three are in Quebec's Eastern Townships, and one is in Nunavut. These 10 small and rural municipalities have much higher artistic concentrations than larger Canadian municipalities (i.e., those with a population of 50,000 or more). In fact, Vancouver, the large municipality with the highest concentration of artists, would rank only 21st among the smaller municipalities. Nine of the 10 small and rural municipalities have an overall labour force of fewer than 3,000 people.

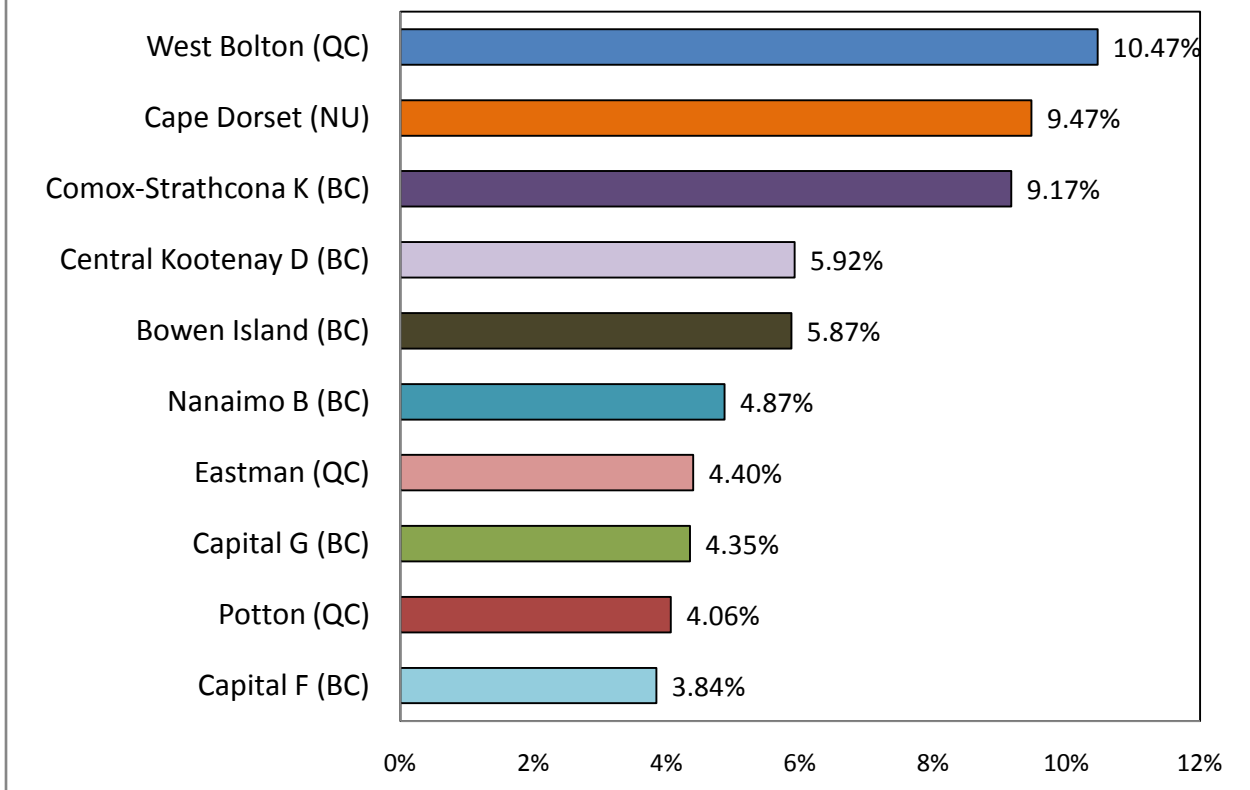
¹ Townships Heritage Web Magazine, developed by the Townshippers' Association, <http://www.townshipsheritage.com/Eng/Archives/News/tourdesarts.html>. See also <http://www.tourdesarts.com>. Both pages viewed December 31, 2009.

² See <http://www.capedorset.ca/en/index.asp>. Viewed December 31, 2009.

³ See <http://www.realhornby.com/creations/artists/>. Viewed December 31, 2009.

⁴ See <http://www.denmanisland.com/>. Viewed December 31, 2009.

Figure 1: Ten small and rural municipalities with the highest concentration of artists, 2006



The arts contribute to the quality of life of many small and rural municipalities

A report on *Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities through Arts and Creativity* indicates that “arts, culture and heritage are viewed not only as amenities to improve the quality of life, but as a foundation upon which the future of these rural/small communities rests. The arts and creative activities can profoundly affect the ability of a town not only to survive over time, but to thrive.”⁵ Rural festivals, events and facilities can help create and maintain rural identities, foster a collective sense of belonging, as well as enable community-building and community cohesion.

A key finding of *Artists in Small and Rural Municipalities in Canada* – that there are significant concentrations of artists in small and rural municipalities across the country – demonstrates that the arts contribute to the quality of life and the social and economic vitality of many small and rural communities in Canada. The text of the full report focuses on municipalities in each province or region with an above-average concentration of artists, while an appendix provides information about all 261 small and rural municipalities with at least 40 artists.

⁵ *Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities through Arts and Creativity: Summary Overview*, Creative City Network of Canada, March 2009, p. 1.

Changes between 2001 and 2006

There are 164 small and rural municipalities with reliable census data from 2001 and no boundary changes between 2001 and 2006. In these 164 municipalities, the number of artists grew by 4% between 2001 and 2006. In comparison, the overall labour force in these 164 municipalities grew by 14% during the same timeframe.

The growth in the number of artists in these small and rural municipalities (4%) was less than the growth in Canada as a whole (7%) and in the 92 larger cities with reliable historical data (8%).

Many small municipalities saw significant changes – both increases and decreases – in the number of artists captured in the 2001 and 2006 census data. Relatively small numbers (e.g., 40 or 50 artists) can make big differences in the number and concentration of artists in these municipalities.

Of the eight small and rural municipalities with the largest increase in the concentration of artists between 2001 and 2006, three are in British Columbia (Capital G RDA, Comox-Strathcona K RDA and Esquimalt DM), three are in Ontario (Bracebridge, Scugog and Mono), and two are in Quebec (Dorval and Mont-Royal).

Methodological notes

Artists include actors, choreographers, craftspeople, composers, conductors, dancers, directors, musicians, producers, singers, visual artists and writers. Individuals are classified in the occupation in which they worked the most hours between May 7 and 13, 2006 (the census reference week).

The study is based on a custom data request from Statistics Canada's 2006 census, commissioned by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Media contact

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