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Summary

Survey of the Social Impacts of Dance Organizations in Canada



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Cover image: Image taken in the *Dancing with Parkinson's* class at Canada's National Ballet School

Photo: Jackielou Perez



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SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Canada Dance Mapping Study* is a multi-year study that has been undertaken on behalf of the dance field in Canada by the Canada Council for the Arts (Canada Council) with an additional financial contribution and in collaboration with the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). Both councils' research and dance program offices provided additional staff resources in support of this study. This Study is the first attempt of its kind to map dance in Canada, including both the professional sector and a full range of dance activities outside of the professional field, and contribute significant new knowledge about the depth and breadth of dance in Canada. The present survey of dance organizations aims to provide new knowledge and a more nuanced understanding of the social impact of dance organizations in Canada. This component of the study began with the development of a social impact framework based on a review of relevant literature in 2015.

Social impact framework

"Social impact" is understood as a broad area of impacts that incorporate the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of individuals and communities. For the purpose of designing the online questionnaire the focus was on six broad areas of impact:

1. Physical and psychological well-being of individuals
2. Empowerment of specific groups, that are often marginalized in society
3. Education; empowerment, skills and / or personality building among children and youth
4. Intellectual enrichment
5. Connection to / Understanding of cultural and linguistic groups
6. Connection / Satisfaction / Trust in relation to community, such as community vitality, energy and vibe, sense of community, belonging, attachment and identify, civic engagement, safety.



Survey sample

A database of approximately 2,800 dance organizations comprising the *Dance Across Canada* map (<http://dancemap.canadacouncil.ca/>) was used as the foundation of the sample for the study. Dance

companies, dance training schools, presenters and service organizations were invited to participate in the survey which was open from November 10 to December 10, 2015. 367 organizations completed the survey. Since the survey is not a probabilistic sample, a response rate or margin of sampling error is not applicable. We have no knowledge about whether or in what ways the respondents are representative of the database – or the Canadian dance field at large. The reader should not extrapolate results beyond the respondents. Sub-group analysis is used to shed light on the different categories of participating dance organizations in terms of their social impact and organizational characteristics.

Summary of findings

Dance organizations increasingly offer programming for social impacts that aim at improving the lives of individuals and their communities

The survey results revealed that a large proportion of respondent organizations are intensely involved in offering programming designed for social impacts. About two-thirds of respondents have offered a dance activity or program during the last three years with the aim of achieving an impact on the health and well-being of individuals and the community; and at an average of almost nine different dance activities during this time. Programming occurs across all six dimensions of social impact examined. It is most pronounced in areas related to education, civic engagement and sense of community belonging, sports and recreation, and multiculturalism.

This programming is designed to achieve a wide range of impacts: from improved health and sense of well-being of individuals, to greater engagement in and attachment to the community, as well as to personal pride in oneself, in one's culture and in one's community. Resilience and ability to cope, decrease risk factors for illness, increased safety and increased literacy are targeted much less frequently among the organizations that responded to the survey

There is a trend towards offering more programming intended to have a social impact. Most organizations involved in this kind of work said that their efforts to produce activities and programs to engender social impacts have increased over the past three years. Further, most expect continued involvement in this type of programming during the next three years with more than half expecting their activities to increase. Of those organizations expecting to increase their programming, most foresee the need to obtain additional funding, and/or increase networking to find partners, and/or increase the number of volunteers. For some, hiring staff or finding additional space or facilities are also important considerations in terms of building capacity.

Prevalence and formats of programming for social impact and populations targeted

Just over half of respondent organizations with programming designed to have a social impact offer activities to enhance community vitality, energy and civic engagement or fostering physical and psychological well-being of individuals. Similarly, half have offered programming to promote healthy

development of children and youth. Just under half have offered initiatives that promote intellectual enrichment or fostered cultural/linguistic appreciation and understanding. Over one-quarter has also offered social programming for specific vulnerable and marginalized segments of society. Community vitality and civic engagement is most often targeted to youth, while individual well-being is most prevalent among those working with seniors. Among the organizations that offer programming in these key social impact areas, most reported that these form part of their core mandate, although to a lesser extent when working with marginalized segments of the population.

In terms of the programming itself, a considerable quantity is reported to foster cultural or linguistic understanding and appreciation (seven programs on average over last three years (2013-2015), followed by fostering community vitality or civic engagement (about five projects).

Programs designed to address the development of children and youth, intellectual enrichment and cultural or linguistic understanding tend to have a median of about 200 participants per program (i.e., half of the organizations reach fewer than 200 and half reach 200 or more). Marginally higher numbers of participants are reported in community vitality/civic engagement programming (often delivered in the education sector). Programming that targets well-being is often tailored to small numbers of participants (median of 100), and engaging marginalized segments, offered by the fewest organizations, is often provided in a smaller group.

Respondent organizations offering programming intended to have a social impact most often described their top three programs as broad-based, not targeting any particular segment of the population. Programming is primarily delivered through classes, and to a lesser extent, dance workshops. Other methods used less frequently (i.e., for about one quarter to one half of organizations) include community events, cultural festivals, arts education (school) programs.

Funding sources are varied. Many rely on fee for service, used by half or more of organizations, even among those targeting marginalized segments of the community. Government funding is reported by about half of the respondent organizations and usually complemented by individual donations.

Most organizations involved in programming designed to have a social impact have associated or worked with other organizations (predominantly other arts organizations or community/recreation centres) over the past three years, emphasizing the strong collaborative nature of this type of programming in the dance field in Canada. Typically, these collaborations are fluid in form and entered into at least as often with partners outside of the arts sector, as they are with arts-based partners. As with the trend observed towards offering more social impact programming over time, opportunities for partnership and collaboration are also rising.