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## STATISTICAL INSIGHTS ON THE ARTS

# A Statistical Profile of Artists in Canada in 2016

With Summary Information about Cultural Workers

SIA report 49

*Revised version: November 2019*

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## Executive summary

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## REVISED REPORT

### Note to readers

Hill Strategies Research has endeavoured over the past 17 years to examine and portray artists as an important component of the labour force.

Exploring the situation of artists (and cultural workers) via the 2016 census has been a major part of Hill Strategies' work over the past year. We have ordered census data for multiple projects, including the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* (SIA) series.

After cross-referencing a recent data request with the SIA dataset, we realized that the two did not match in areas where they should have. Further investigation identified issues with the custom dataset compiled by Statistics Canada from the 2016 census which formed the basis of this report.

The original data request was run on a larger group of census respondents, including those who were no longer in the labour force in May of 2016 but who had worked in some capacity since January of 2015. To clarify:

- Experienced labour force = employed in May 2016 + unemployed in May 2016 who had worked since January 2015.
- Incorrect dataset: employed in May 2016 + unemployed in May 2016 but had worked since January 2015 + **not in the labour force in May 2016 but had worked since January 2015.**

Because it is counterintuitive to include people who were not in the labour force in May of 2016 as part of a sector's labour force, we retracted the original report upon confirmation of the error and are now issuing a corrected report.

In 17 years, this is the first report that we have had to correct, and we sincerely regret any inconvenience that the incorrectly run data may have caused.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Hill  
President, Hill Strategies Research

The report focuses on the working lives of artists in Canada, including statistics on:

- The overall number of artists
- Artists by occupation
- Demographic information such as gender, education, age, Indigenous people, members of racialized groups<sup>1</sup>, and more
- Self-employment rates
- Total incomes, employment incomes, and household incomes
- The industries where artists work, with a focus on the three most common sectors for artists: 1) arts, entertainment, and recreation; 2) educational services; and 3) information and cultural industries

The report also provides a brief summary of the situation of cultural workers in Canada (a broader grouping which includes but extends well beyond artists).

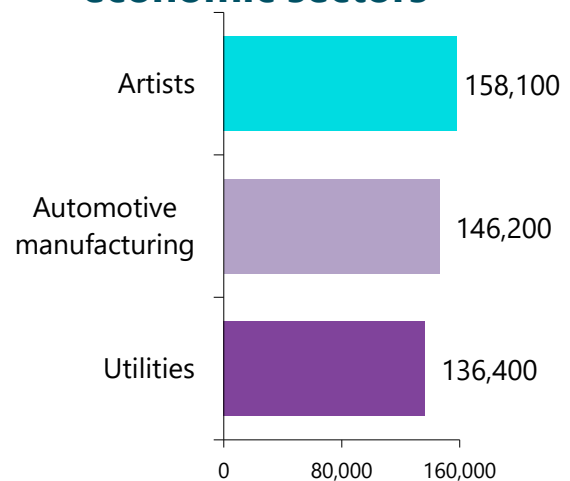
The report is based on a custom data request from the 2016 long-form census, which classifies people in the occupation in which they worked the most hours during the census reference week (May 1 to 7, 2016).

## Over 158,000 artists in Canada

There are 158,100 artists (who spent more time at their art than at any other occupation in May of 2016), representing almost 1% of the overall Canadian labour force (0.87%). In other words, 1 in every 116 Canadian workers is an artist.

The number of artists (158,100) is greater than the labour force in automotive manufacturing (146,200) and the utilities sector (136,400), as shown in Figure ES1.

**Figure ES1: Artists compared with workers in other economic sectors**



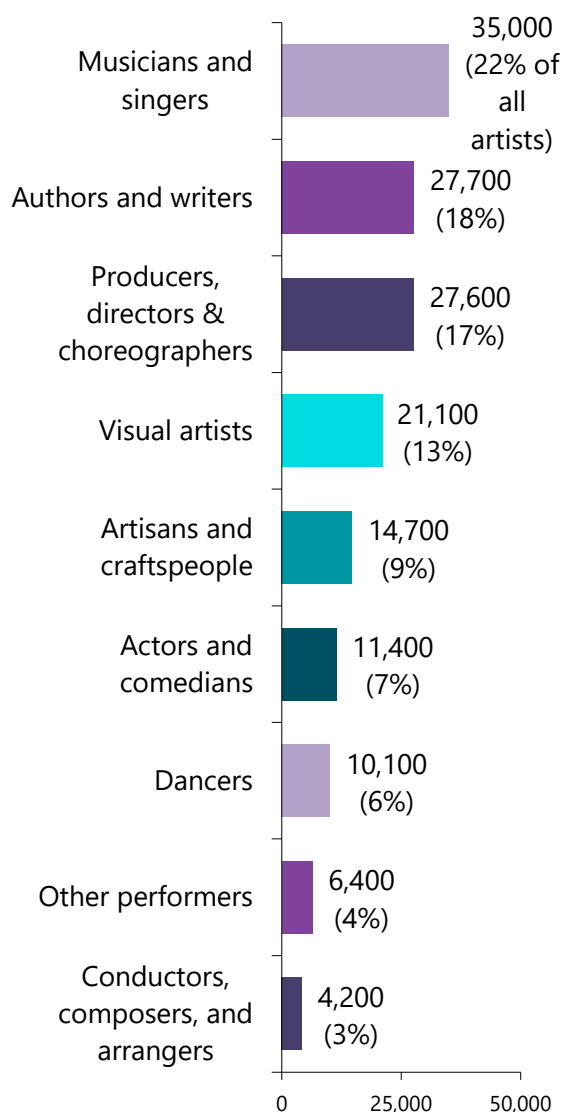
Source: 2016 census custom data request

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada identified certain people as being from a “visible minority” based on a question about their background. This report refers to these people as “racialized”

## 9 occupations included as “artists”

Nine detailed occupation codes are included in the count of artists. The occupations are shown from largest to smallest in Figure ES2.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure ES2: Artists by occupation**



Source: 2016 census custom data request

<sup>2</sup> The other performers category includes circus performers, magicians, puppeteers, models, and other performers not elsewhere classified.

## Key demographic and employment characteristics

The report contains other key findings related to the working lives of artists:

- Women comprise 52% of artists, higher than the proportion of all workers (48%).
- A much larger percentage of artists than all workers have a bachelor’s degree or higher (47% vs. 28%).
- 52% of artists are self-employed, compared with only 12% of all Canadian workers.
- The age distribution of artists is fairly similar to all workers: nearly one-half of artists (46%) are 45 years of age or older, similar to the 44% of all workers. However, more artists than all workers are 65 years of age or older (9% vs. 4%).
- Racialized Canadians are under-represented among artists (15%) compared with all workers (21%).
- Indigenous and immigrant workers are slightly under-represented among artists: Indigenous People (3.1% of artists and 3.9% of all workers) and immigrants (21% of artists and 24% of all workers).

## Median income of artists is 44% lower than all Canadian workers

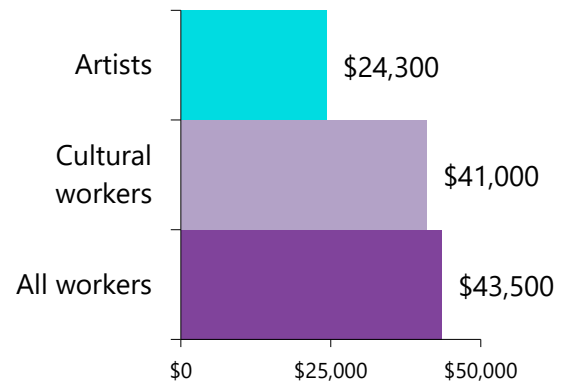
As shown in Figure ES3, the median individual income of Canada’s artists is \$24,300, or 44% less than all Canadian workers (\$43,500). Cultural workers have median individual incomes of \$41,000, or 6% less than all workers.

This summary focuses on median incomes, which are believed to provide a better indication of the typical situation of artists than the average (i.e., the “mean”), which is more strongly affected by a few individuals with very high incomes.

The main component of total income, for most workers, is employment income (including wages, salaries, and self-employment earnings). A typical artist has employment income of \$17,300, a figure that is 56% lower than the median of all workers (\$39,000).

For the first time in 2016, household income statistics were requested from the census. The findings from this analysis are somewhat less dire than the individual income statistics. A typical artist has a household income of \$57,800, 33% lower than all workers (\$86,500).

**Figure ES3: Median individual incomes of artists, cultural workers, and all workers**



Source: 2016 census custom data request. Income figures relate to the 2015 calendar year.

## Median incomes vary substantially by occupation and industry

There is a vast difference in median incomes between the nine arts occupations. From lowest to highest, the median incomes by occupation are:

- Dancers: \$15,800 (64% lower than the median income of all workers)
- Other performers not classified elsewhere: \$16,900 (61% lower)
- Musicians and singers: \$17,900 (59% lower)
- Actors and comedians: \$18,500 (57% lower)
- Visual artists: \$20,000 (54% lower)
- Artisans and craftspeople: \$20,500 (53% lower)
- Conductors, composer, and arrangers: \$29,700 (32% lower)
- Authors and writers: \$40,000 (8% lower)
- Producers, directors, choreographers, and related occupations: \$49,300 (13% higher than the median income of all workers)

The median income of artists is much higher in the information and cultural industries grouping (\$44,700) than in the other industry sectors: \$19,300 in arts, entertainment, and recreation, \$17,500 in educational services, and \$30,100 in all other industries.

## Over 726,000 cultural workers

There are 726,600 cultural workers in Canada, including heritage occupations (such as librarians, museum workers, and archivists), cultural occupations (such as designers, editors, and architects), and the nine arts occupations. Cultural workers account for 4% of the overall labour force. In other words, one in every 25 Canadian workers has a cultural occupation.

The number of cultural workers (726,600) is over two-and-a-half times larger than the labour force in real estate (280,100), about double the labour force on farms (342,800), and slightly higher than the labour force in the wholesale trade industry (665,700).

## About this report

This report contains statistics on the working lives of artists and cultural workers analyzed from the 2016 long-form census. The first section of the full report looks at artists as a group, with summary statistics about cultural workers, while the second section provides information about each of the nine arts occupations.

Readers should keep in mind a number of important aspects of census data. When the census was conducted in 2016, Canadians 15 and older were classified in the occupation in which they worked the most hours during the census reference week (May 1 to 7, 2016). If they were unemployed during that week, they are classified based on the job at which they worked the longest since January 1, 2015. If they did not work at all during that period, or if they were not in the labour force during the reference week, they are excluded from the experienced labour force (and the statistics in this report). The census collected income information for 2015, the most recent full calendar year.

It is also important to note that, due to major changes in methods between the 2011 National Household Survey and the 2016 census, data in this report are not comparable to previous reports.

Some aspects of the census have particular relevance in capturing the working lives of artists:

- Artists who spent more time at another occupation than at their artwork during the reference week would be classified in the other occupation. The census does not capture information about secondary occupations.
- Each occupation includes individuals who are employed or self-employed.
- Artists who teach in post-secondary, secondary, or elementary schools are classified as professors or teachers, not in artistic occupations. Instructors and teachers in some settings (such as private arts schools, academies, and conservatories) are *included* as "artists".

Full methodological notes can be found in Appendix 2 of the full report.

Subsequent reports will examine artists in Canadian municipalities and demographic differences in the situations of artists.

The *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series, created by Hill Strategies Research in 2002, is co-funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the Ontario Arts Council as part of their shared commitment to making arts research available to inform the work of Canada's arts community and inform the general public about Canada's arts sector.