

Artworks

The Economic and Social Dividends from
Canada's Arts and Culture Sector

October 2025



Canadian
Chamber of
Commerce

Chambre de
Commerce
du Canada



Business
Data Lab

Laboratoire de données
sur les entreprises

*Photo Credit: Pollination Ceremony by the Riel Gentlemen's
Choir at Nuit Blanche Winnipeg, 2022. Photo by Adam Kelly.*

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Business / Arts in partnership with the Canada Council for the Arts engaged the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Business Data Lab (BDL) to assess the economic footprint of Canada's arts and culture sector. The report leverages the Statistics Canada Culture Satellite Account (CSA) and supply-use tables from Statistics Canada to quantify the sector's contribution to the Canadian economy.

Overview

Canada's arts and culture sector is a vibrant driver of economic growth, social cohesion, and quality of life. From film and music to visual arts and heritage, the creative industries contribute not only to national identity but also to growth and regional development. Yet, despite its clear benefits, public and private investment in culture is on the decline. Investment in this sector is a precursor to the immense socio-economic benefits that impact communities across the country. This report will highlight the sector's social and economic impacts, consumer and export trends, and the return on investment from increased funding.

Key research questions

- What are the socio-economic contributions of the arts and culture economy to Canada?
- What are trends in arts and culture domains, household spending, and trade of cultural goods and services?
- Is there a link between regional grant funding levels and both economic outcomes (i.e GDP) and Canadians' sense of belonging?
- What is the public and private arts and culture funding gap?
- How does Canadian funding compare with peer countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia?

Understanding impact

Direct impact: Impact that is directly attributable to the arts and culture organization, facility or event operations.

Indirect impact: The impact attributed to the changes in the demand of businesses in the arts and culture supply-chain that provide the goods and services to arts and culture organizations.

Induced impact: The impact attributed to workers both directly and indirectly throughout the arts and culture supply chain, who spend their wages buying goods and services elsewhere (i.e. groceries, gasoline, haircuts, etc.).

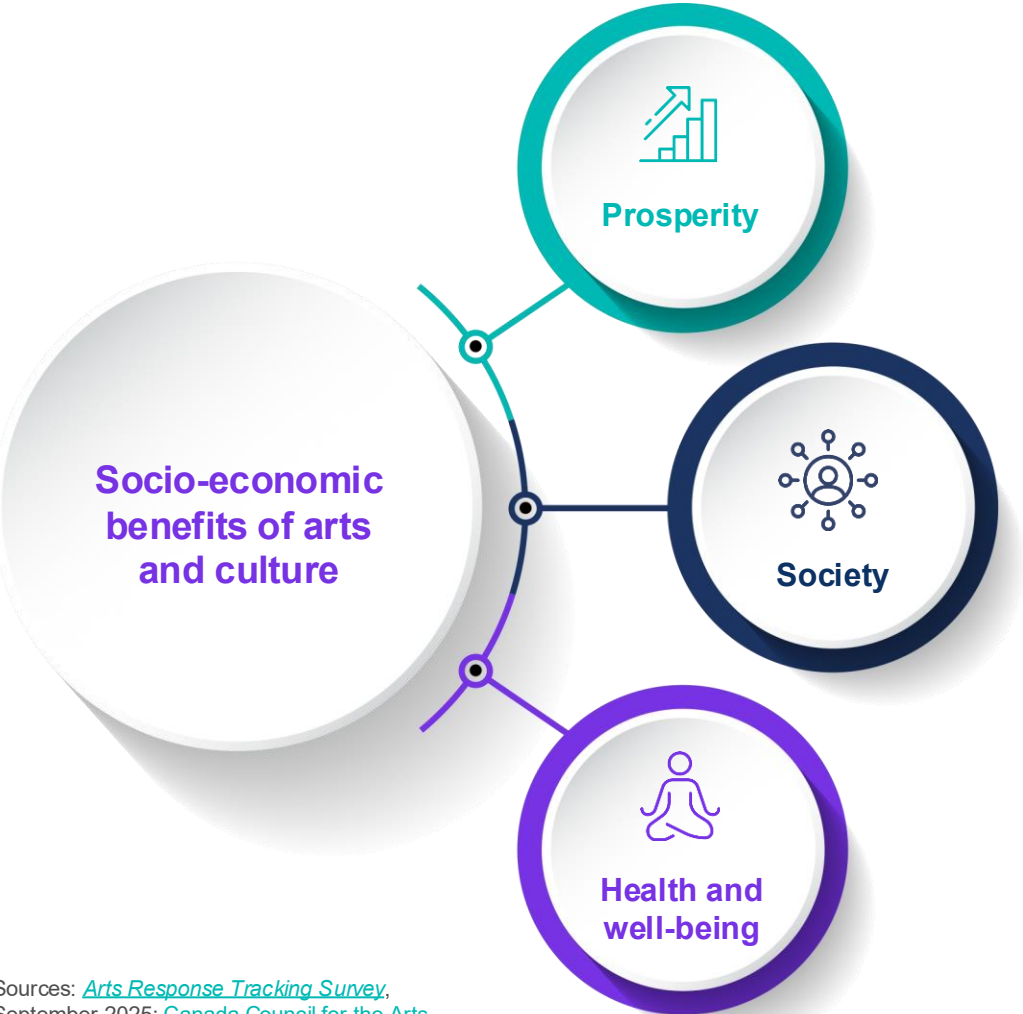


Social and Economic Impacts of Arts and Culture in Canada



The historic district of Quebec City (Old Quebec)

Arts and culture are central to higher quality of life.



75% ↑ 12 percentage point
increase from August 2024.

of Canadians believe that attending arts and culture events positively impacts their sense of belonging in Canada.

Business / Arts, through their quarterly **Arts Response Tracking Survey (ARTS)**, examine Canadian “culture-goers” attitudes and behaviours, finding that people are drawn to participate in arts and culture for several key reasons. These include fostering connections with others, gaining new perspectives, and building a sense of belonging within their communities. Previous releases have pointed to arts’ ability to help reduce stress and enhance well-being.

These findings are consistent with central indicators in the [Quality of Life Framework for Canada](#).

Sources: [Arts Response Tracking Survey](#),
September 2025; [Canada Council for the Arts](#)

Arts improve other aspects of the economy and society.



Knowledge

- Stimulates the creative economy.
- Increases understanding of diverse communities.
- Changes attitudes towards community participation.
- Increases employability and improves skills associated with development in society.



Society

- Improves business and entrepreneurial culture.
- Positive impact on the residential and property sectors.
- Improves productivity and competitiveness.
- Boosts innovation and digital technology.



Networks

- Builds social cohesion, community, and integration of newcomers.
- Improves health and well-being.
- Creates attractive ecosystems and cities for top talent.
- Stimulates urban development and economic impact of clusters.



Spotlight: Sudbury's creative economy

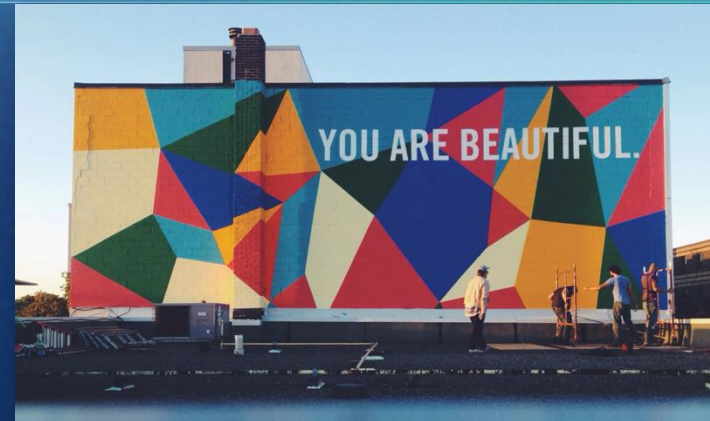
Focus: We Live Up Here and Sudbury's cultural strategy

The creative partnership between Barrydowne Paint and We Live Up Here (WLUH) has transformed downtown Sudbury, resulting in over 100 new murals and public art pieces.

WLUH's *Up Here Festival* unites muralists, musicians and installation artists each summer to turn the city into an open-air art gallery. Barrydowne Paint supports the vision by providing paint, expertise and a commitment to local impact.

"This partnership highlights storytelling and brings new life to the city's narrative through creative placemaking. The artworks belong to the community, reshaping Sudbury's identity beyond mining to showcase innovation and urbanity, while boosting tourism and local business."

— Christian Pelletier, WLUH Board President.



Credit: You Are Beautiful by We Live Up Here, August 2013

Durham Street, above 113 Durham



Credit: Alex Trebek by Kevin Ledo



Credit: A Young Prince Hounded by Ignoble Beasts Pressed into Man's Servitude or My Dogs in the Road by Jean Paul Langlois

The art of the city: talent, inclusion, and community.

Arts communities drive socio-economic outcomes in cities.

Talent attraction and retention

Vibrant arts communities are magnets for skilled workers. Cities that invest in culture attract and keep “creative-class” talent (people in tech, science, design, media, and professional services), driving higher innovation and growth.

Enhanced social cohesion

Cultural participation builds belonging and attachment, especially for equity-seeking groups. Cohesive, engaged communities are more resilient and better able to collaborate, which supports business growth and investment attraction.

Immigrant integration

Participation in arts and cultural life accelerates newcomers' sense of belonging and civic connection. Programs like the Institute for Canadian Citizenship's [Canoo](#) provides newcomers with free access to cultural institutions, strengthening settlement outcomes.

Canadian global cities like Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver exemplify urban arts vibrancy. Research suggests that culture is central to why people stay in a particular city.

Gensler's *City Pulse 2025* finds that the strongest predictors of staying include emotional connection and a sense of belonging, both powerfully shaped by arts and cultural life. Cities that create engaging cultural experiences, nurture an authentic local identity, and foster urban vibrancy are more likely to retain people over time.

Tourism is also a force multiplier when it comes to culture, sustaining downtowns, venues and small businesses. Ontario cultural tourists generate a disproportionate share of total tourism spending, according to a 2023 Ontario Arts Council report. Culture visitors also stay longer: 40% of Canadian cultural tourists taking trips of three days or more; nearly one in three international visitors engage in cultural activities while in Ontario.

It's not all about cities — rural communities play an important role in providing cultural programming for residents. Distance is the main barrier to increased arts participation by culture-goers reported in the *Arts Response Tracking Survey*.

Spotlight: Newcomers and immigrant integration

Focus: Toyin Oladele and the Immigrant Council for Arts

The story of Toyin Lafenwa Oladele, Founder and Executive Director of the Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation (ICAI), demonstrates how the arts empower newcomers and contribute to Canada's cultural and economic growth.

A Calgary-based arts professional and cultural strategist originally from Nigeria, Miss Oladele immigrated to Canada in 2017. Within two years, she founded ICAI, transforming a common newcomer challenge — transferring professional skills and networks — into a thriving career. As of 2025, her work has supported and mentored over 150 professionals, empowering artists, arts organizations, newcomers and immigrants across Canada.

Established in 2019, ICAI delivers targeted professional development programs, including the Newcomer Arts Professional Program (NAPP) and Mentors in Residence, helping participants navigate the Canadian arts ecosystem and build sustainable careers. The organization also advances diversity, equity, and inclusion by creating accessible community spaces, showcasing newcomer artists, and advocating for systemic change.

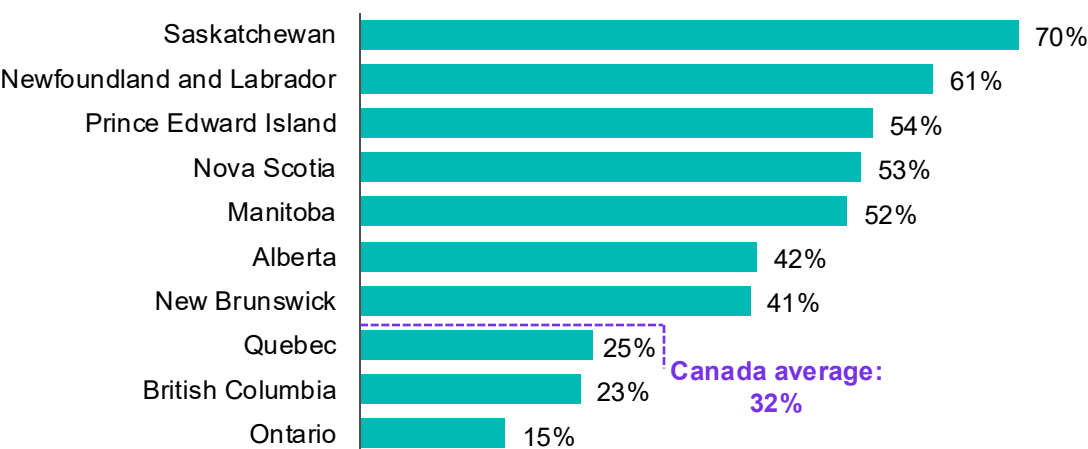
Awards include: Top 100 Black Women to Watch in Canada, Avenue Calgary 40 under 40, Top 25 EDIA Person of the Year, Global Women; Local Changemakers by Calgary Immigrant Women Association, CBC Special Black History Month recognition, Formidable Women 2023 and 2024 by CRIEC etc.



Arts and culture is more rural than the share of population.

Arts and culture organization density

Rural share of total arts and culture non-profits, 2022

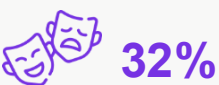


Arts and culture represents an outsized presence in rural Canada compared to the population. Nearly one-third of arts and culture organizations (2022) are in rural communities, with one-fifth of artists (2021) located in rural communities. Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have a higher share of artists in rural areas. Whereas Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador have the highest share of rural arts and culture organizations, with 70% of Saskatchewan's arts organizations located in rural communities.

In Canada, many cultural organizations operate with smaller budgets, lean administrative capacity and limited finance staff. Rural non-profits have fewer staff than urban areas, with non-profit organizations operating with an average of 16 staff. With an already small non-profit employee base, rural arts and culture organizations face an even greater challenge, operating with only 4 staff.

Statistics Canada research on reported life satisfaction shows that Eastern Canada, specifically Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador have the highest scores. Rural communities generally scored higher compared to urban centres. Despite strong spillovers to community satisfaction and belonging, the arts and culture non-profit sector remains under-capitalized in rural communities.

Rural community share



Arts and culture organizations



21%

Non-profit organizations



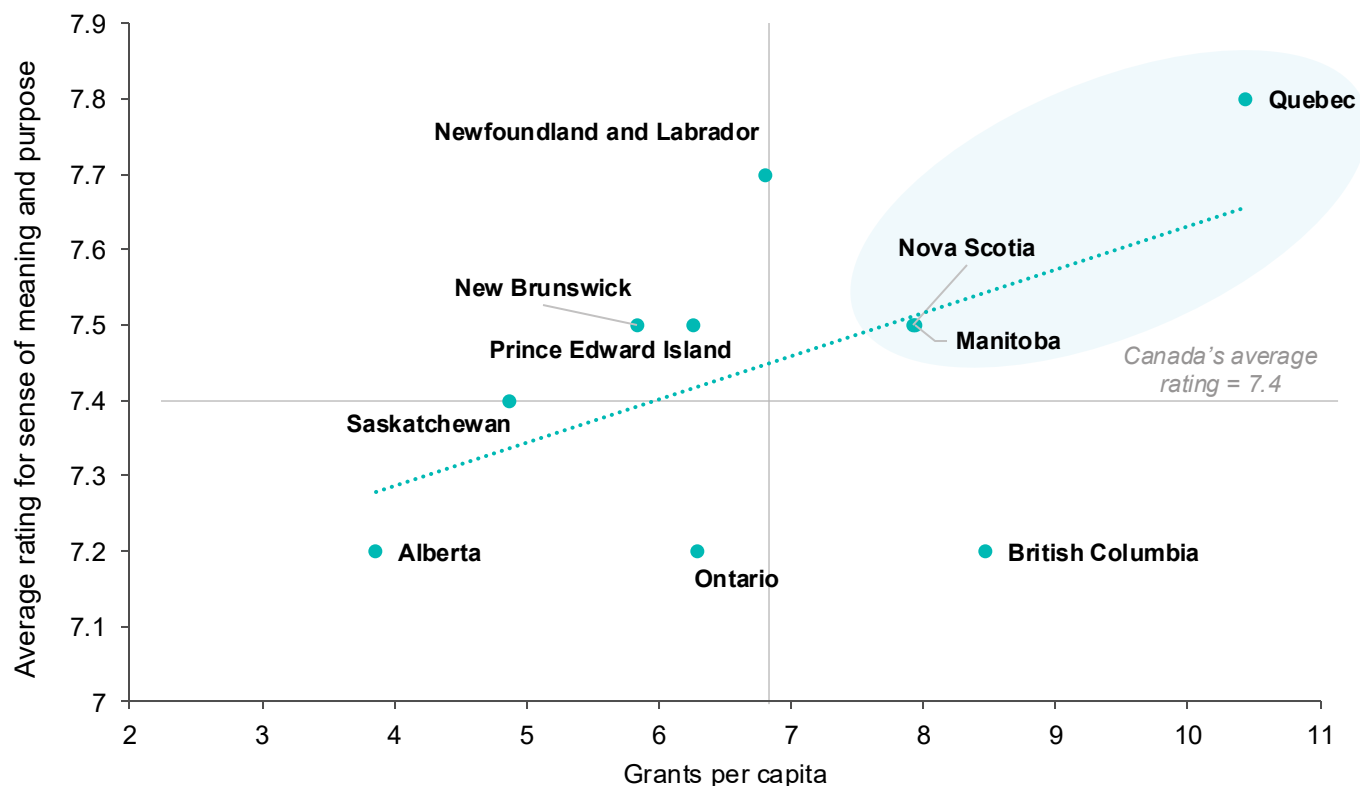
15%

Canadian population

Stable operating support, retention measures and rural delivery funding would materially strengthen resilience and impact.

Arts funding generally coincides with higher well-being.

Exploring the relationship between grants funding and “meaning and purpose” ratings



Grant funding is critical to enabling the arts and culture sector. There exists a relationship between Canadian arts and culture grants and Canadian well-being scores. We compare federally-funded grants per capita for each province against a survey-based rating of meaning and purpose based on Canada's *Quality of Life Framework*. The indicator comes from the 2024 *Canadian Social Survey*.

- **Overall, across provinces, higher grants per capita is generally associated with higher reported ratings of sense of meaning and purpose.** Similar results occur when measuring against life satisfaction.
- Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba have a high grant-to-capita ratio as well as higher well-being and purpose ratings.
- Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan have strong meaning and purpose ratings despite modest grant levels.
- Alberta and Ontario have fewer grants per capita and lower well-being ratings, even though these provinces generate the highest GDP per grants dollar. British Columbia is an outlier despite having a significant arts and culture sector.

Sources: BDL analysis based on data from Statistics Canada (Tables 13-10-0845-01 and 17-10-0005-01) and [Canada Council for the Arts data](#).

*Pearson correlation with Fisher-z 95% CI; Spearman $\rho = 0.44$. Linear fit: $y = 0.057x + 7.057$

Spotlight: Manitoba higher well-being

Focus: MBLL

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries (MBLL) is a crown corporation committed to community well-being through financial contributions, employee volunteerism and partnerships.

MBLL's support for the arts is extensive, funding hundreds of festivals, cultural events and charitable activities each year. In 2022–2023, MBLL supported 379 organizations with over \$1.9 million in sponsorships and 4,973 volunteer hours from staff.

Their commitment extends to major institutions such as the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (RMT), including more than two decades of support for RMT's Regional Tour, as well as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Winnipeg Folk Festival.

"Manitoba is a province rich in culture and diversity, and we are proud to partner with so many outstanding organizations that contribute to the vibrant fabric of our communities. We know that when our arts and cultural organizations succeed, we are all better for it."

– Gerry Sul, President and CEO, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries.

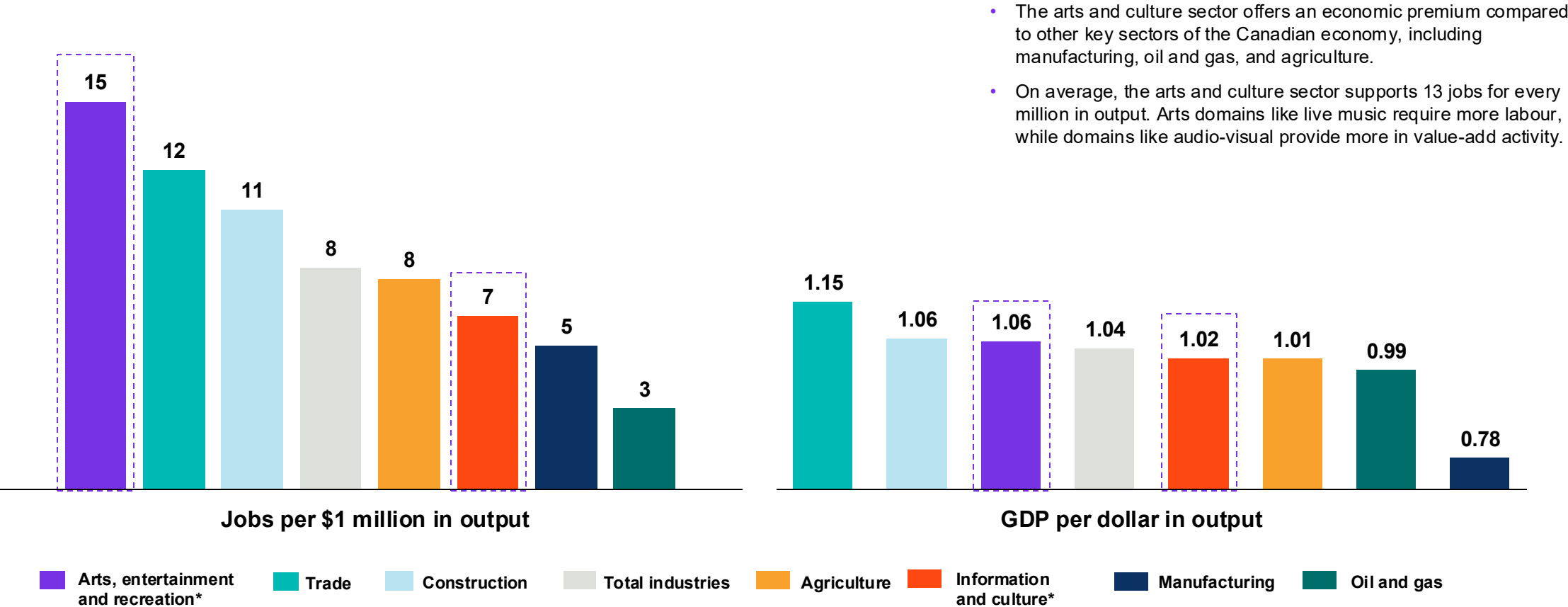


Credit: Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, Employee Volunteers



Credit: Photo by April Carandang

Arts and culture support more jobs and GDP than some of Canada's largest sectors.



Source: Statistics Canada multipliers from Supply-Use Table 36-10-0013-01.
Note: Includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts using 2021 multipliers. Trade, construction, and agriculture are an average of select sub-sectors. *Arts and culture domains are represented in the following categories at the summary industry level and may not be comparable to other figures in the report.

Small town theatre festival, big time economic impact

For over fifty years, the **Blyth Festival Theatre** has placed Canadian storytelling centre stage in Blyth, Ontario, a town of about a thousand people, generating an impressive economic impact.

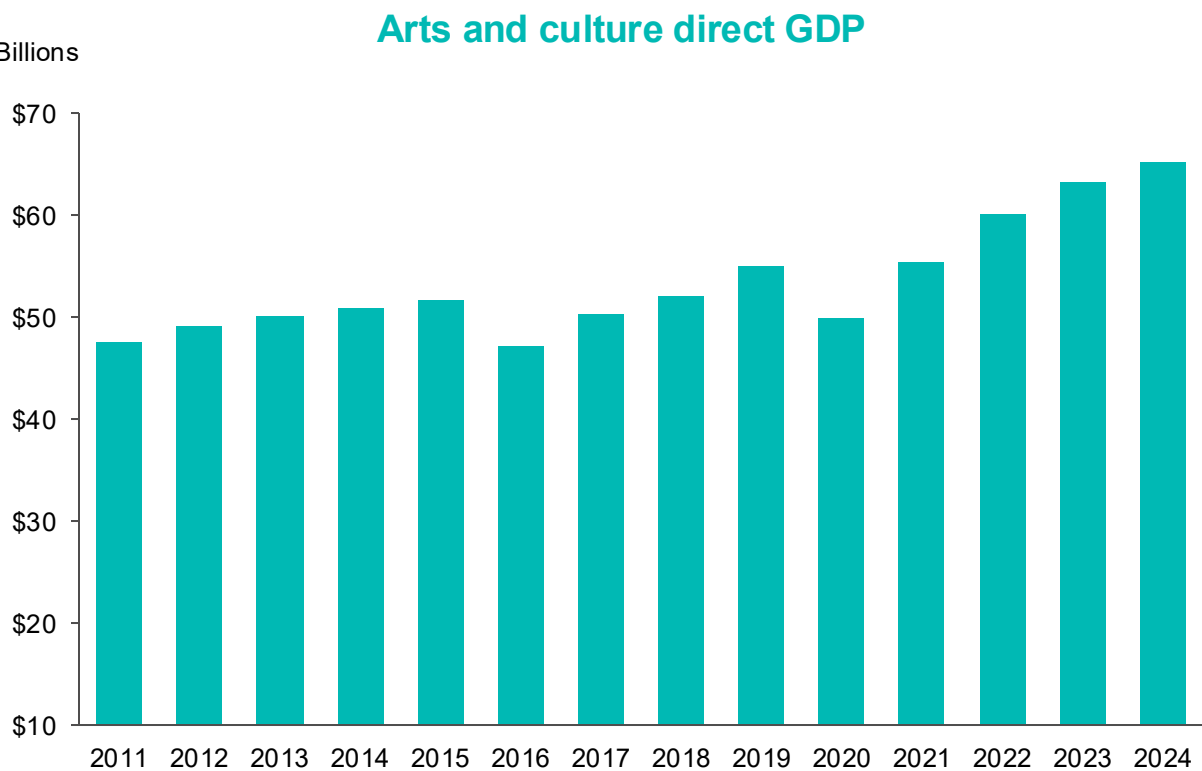
Over the last six seasons, the Festival has generated almost **\$30 million in GDP impact** in Ontario, creating **358 jobs** that account for almost **\$20 million in labour income**, and generating close to **\$10 million in tax revenue**.

Last year alone, they sold **more than 25,000 tickets to attendees** from across the province and beyond. Those theatregoers brought significant spending to town: **Every dollar spent on a ticket at the festival generated nearly \$9 in economic activity** in the province.



Credit: Blyth Festival Theatre. Season Opening Night Audience 2025

Arts and culture support \$65 billion of Canada's economy.



Canada's arts and culture sector directly contributed \$65 billion to the Canadian economy in 2024, accounting for 2% of Canada's nominal GDP.

- Following nearly a decade of nominal GDP stagnation, the sector has added nearly \$10 billion since 2021, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.
- Over the past three years, the arts and culture sector outpaced growth of Canada's economy, growing nearly 8%, compared to 4% growth of the overall economy.
- The arts and culture sector, irrespective of the pandemic challenges, has outpaced growth in key sectors like oil and gas, wholesale trade, retail trade, construction, and manufacturing since 2011.



Fort York, Toronto

Source: BDL analysis using national accounts and Culture Satellite Account (CSA) from Statistics Canada. Nominal GDP in Canadian dollars at basic prices.
Note: 2024 GDP is constructed using quarterly data from the culture satellite accounts.

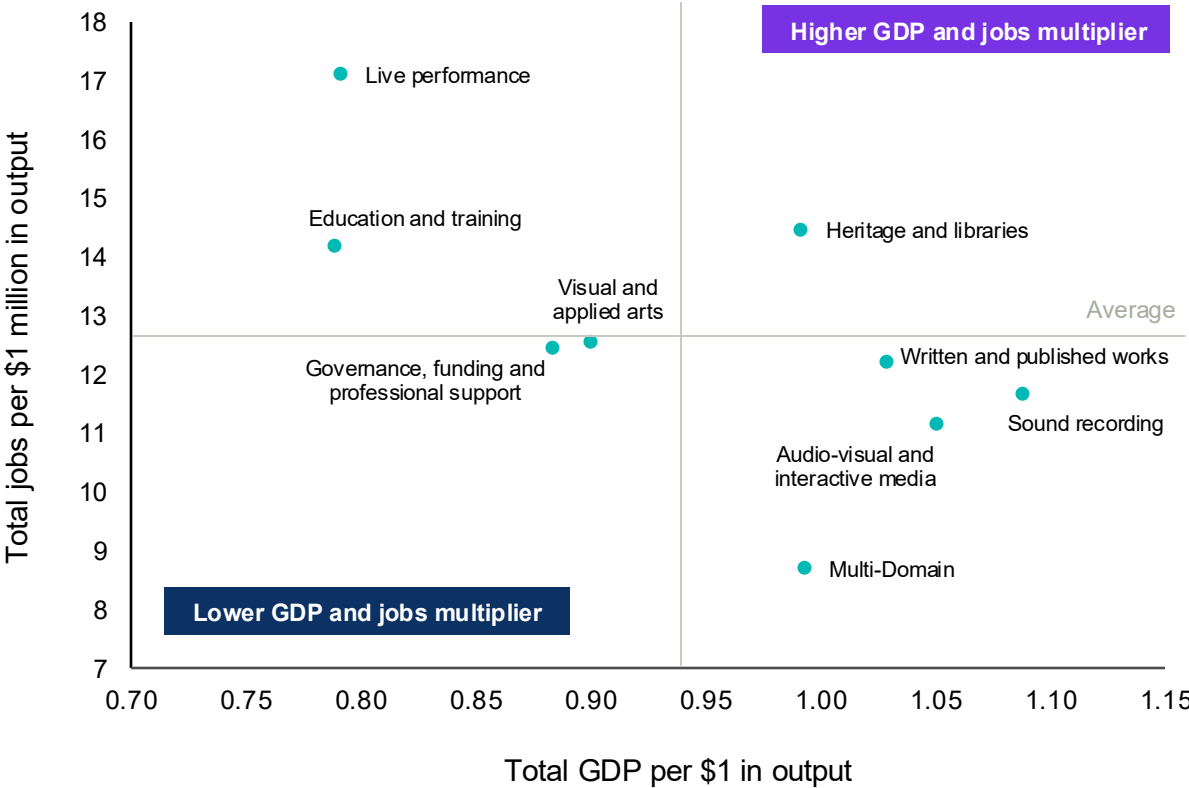
Arts and culture is a high economic impact sector.

Canadian arts and culture impact (2024)

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
 Jobs	668,367	264,284	195,242	1,127,893
 GDP (millions)	\$65,328	\$40,146	\$25,194	\$130,667
 Tax revenue (millions)	\$16,514			

- Arts and culture supports \$131 billion of Canada’s GDP and 1.1 million jobs across the country, when accounting for total impacts throughout the economy. Audio-visual and interactive media is the top contributor to the sector’s impact, representing \$36 billion in GDP and 291,000 jobs. Followed by visual and applied arts, these two distinct domains account for 70% of the arts and culture sector’s total economic impact.
- Live performance supports nearly 17 jobs per \$1 million in output, leading domains in employment generation, but sound recording returns nearly \$1.10 in GDP for every \$1 in sector output.

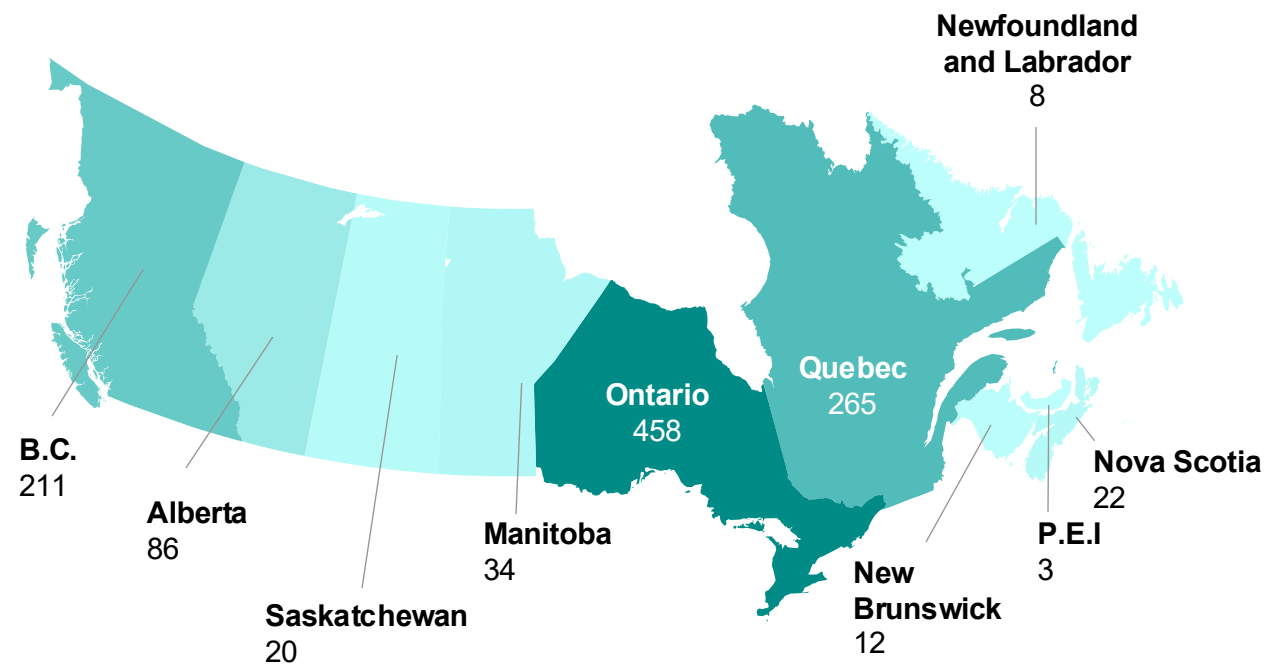
Breakdown of arts and culture domain multipliers



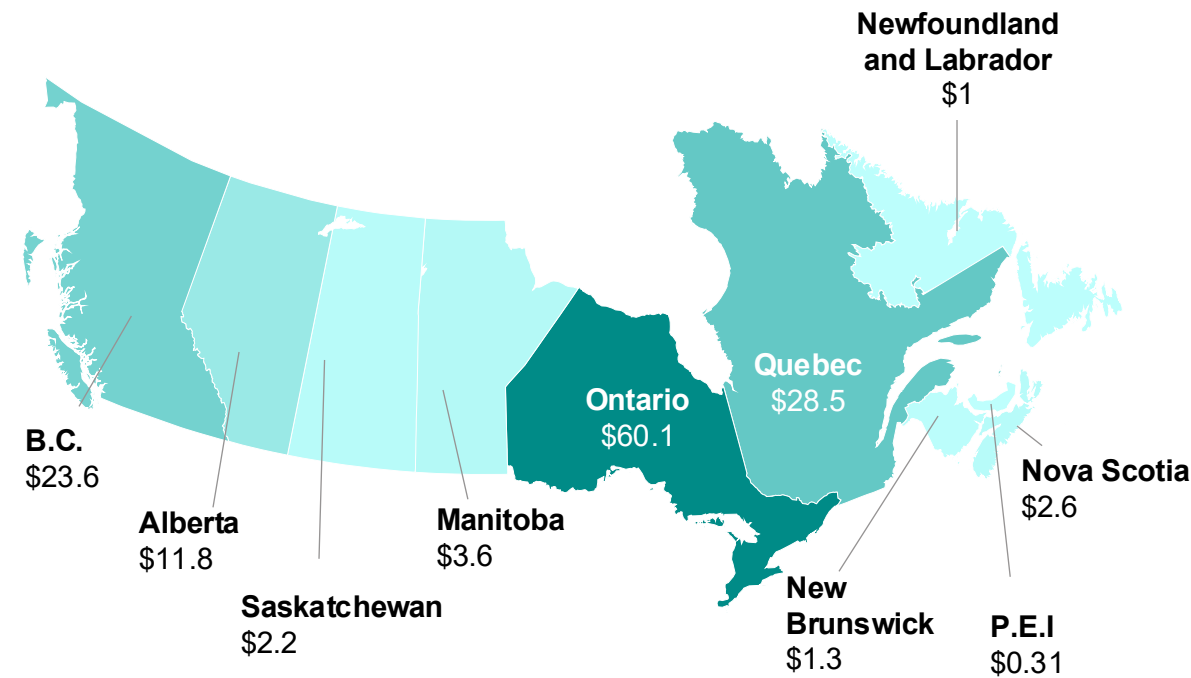
Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: All figures are in current dollars. Total GDP includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Data from territories and outside of Canada not included.
Tax revenue includes federal and provincial personal and corporate tax.

Economic impact concentrated in three hubs: ON, QC, BC.

Arts and culture
total jobs impact
2023, thousands



Arts and culture
total GDP impact
2023, billions



Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: Provincial impact numbers are 2023 and won't add to national numbers. Values include direct, indirect, and induced impacts.

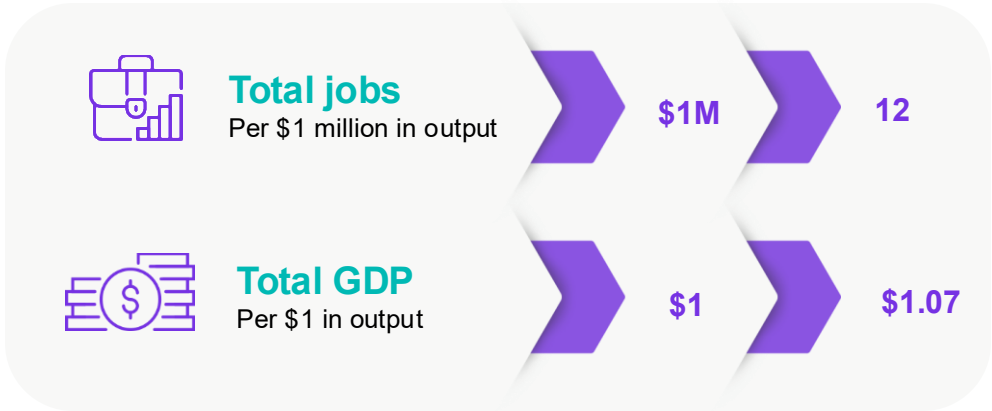
Ontario: Strong visual and applied arts sector.

Ontario arts and culture impact (2023)

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
 Jobs	267,378	110,825	79,844	458,048
 GDP (millions)	\$27,976	\$17,920	\$14,244	\$60,140
 Tax revenue (millions)		\$7,331		

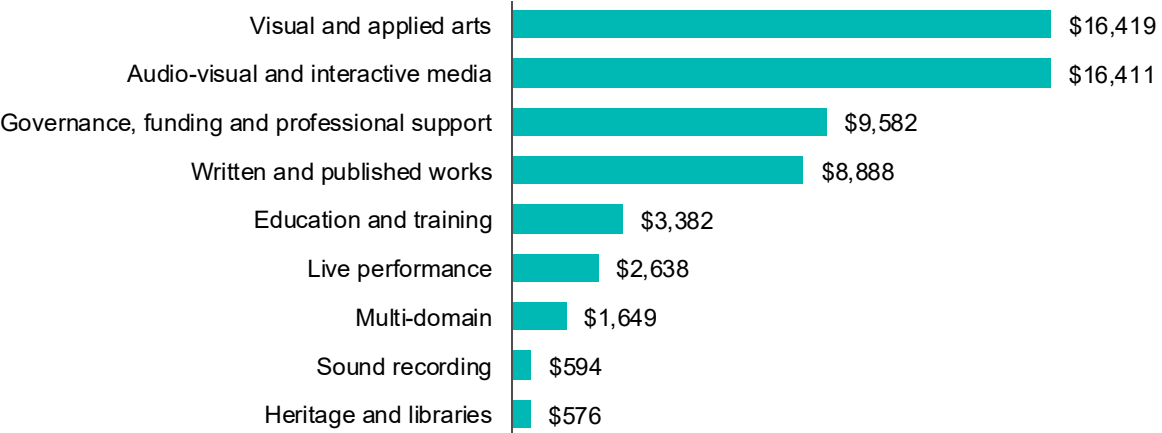
- Ontario’s arts and culture sector has broad domain coverage, contributing \$60 billion in GDP and supporting 458,000 jobs. Visual and applied arts, followed by audio-visual and interactive media, are the most significant contributors to Ontario’s arts and culture sector, accounting for more than half (55%) of the total GDP impact.
- Ontario also has the largest live performance domain in the country, supporting \$2.6 billion in GDP, which thrives off its large population and strong tourism market.

Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: All figures are in current dollars. Total GDP and jobs includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Data from territories and outside of Canada not included. Tax revenue includes federal and provincial personal and corporate tax.



Ontario arts and culture domains

2023 total GDP impact, millions of Canadian dollars



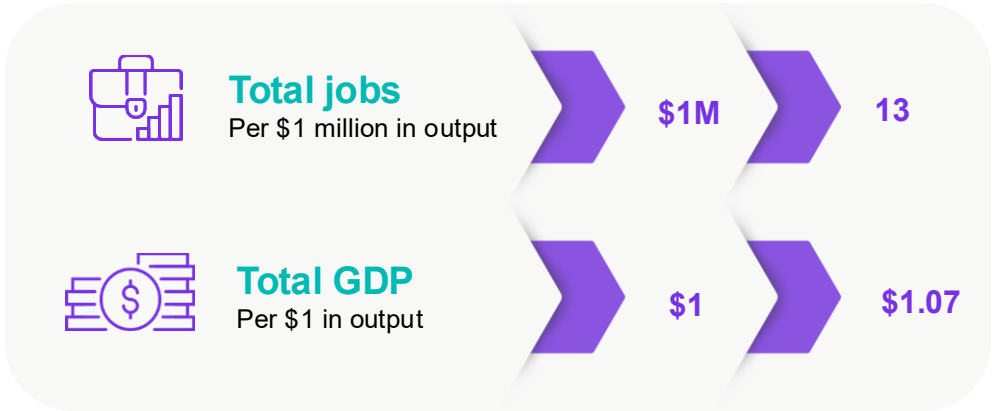
Quebec: Punches above its weight in arts and culture.

Quebec arts and culture impact (2023)

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
 Jobs	161,623	61,539	41,489	264,651
 GDP (millions)	\$13,674	\$8,511	\$6,340	\$28,525
 Tax revenue (millions)		\$3,263		

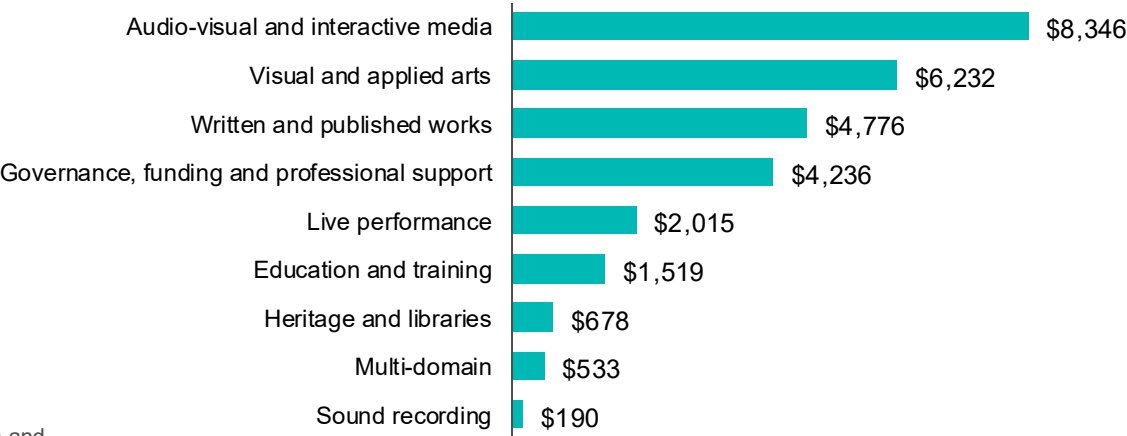
- Quebec's arts and culture sector contributes \$29 billion in GDP and supports 265,000 jobs. As the second-largest province for arts and culture, Quebec supports a significant 13 jobs per \$1 million in output and generates \$1.07 in GDP per \$1 in output.
- Quebec's share of arts and culture GDP (22%) is larger than its share of Canada's GDP (20%). Written and published works is the third largest domain in the province, but it's driven by Quebec's strong heritage and culture content creation.

Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: All figures are in current dollars. Total GDP and jobs includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Data from territories and outside of Canada not included. Tax revenue includes federal and provincial personal and corporate tax.



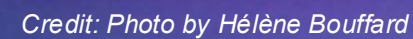
Quebec arts and culture domains

2023 total GDP impact, millions of Canadian dollars





The company employs about 20 permanent staff and a large number of freelance artists, artisans, designers, authors, performers and freelance technicians who work to create Ex Machina's shows, which are seen by hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.

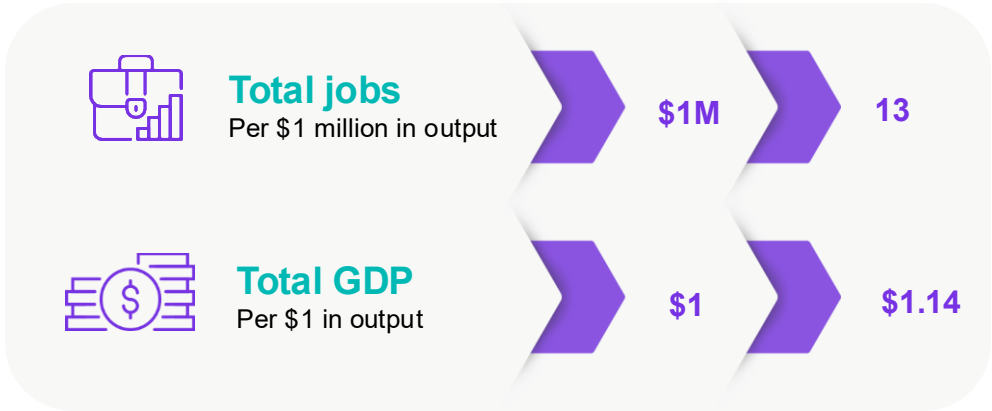


British Columbia: Highest GDP impact per \$1 in output.

British Columbia arts and culture impact (2023)

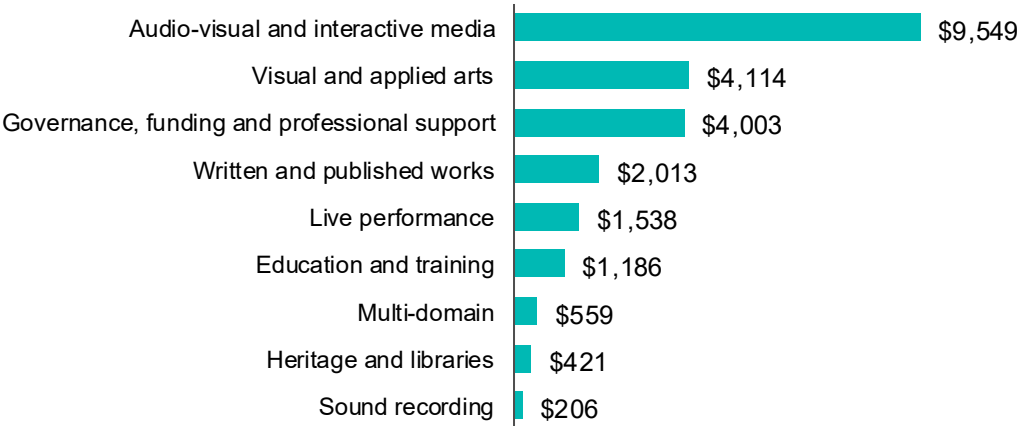
	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
 Jobs	122,644	51,221	37,608	211,473
 GDP (millions)	\$10,479	\$6,717	\$6,393	\$23,590
 Tax revenue (millions)		\$2,894		

- British Columbia’s arts and culture sector contributes \$24 billion in GDP and supporting 211,000 jobs. British Columbia returns \$1.14 in GDP for every \$1 in sector output, the highest out of all provinces.
- In British Columbia, film, video, and interactive media, which are part of the broader audio-visual and interactive media domain, accounts for 40% of the total GDP impact and total jobs in the culture sector.



British Columbia arts and culture domains

2023 total GDP impact, millions of Canadian dollars



Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: All figures are in current dollars. Total GDP and jobs includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Data from territories and outside of Canada not included. Tax revenue includes federal and provincial personal and corporate tax.

Prairies represent 13% of Canada's arts sector.

Prairies arts and culture impact (2023)

		Alberta	Manitoba	Saskatchewan
 Jobs	Direct	53,189	21,344	12,831
	Indirect	19,049	6,899	3,746
	Induced	13,932	5,579	3,082
	Total	86,169	33,822	19,659
 GDP (millions \$)	Direct	\$5,548	\$1,755	\$1,056
	Indirect	\$3,442	\$946	\$597
	Induced	\$2,807	\$906	\$533
	Total	\$11,798	\$3,607	\$2,185
 Tax revenue (millions \$)		\$1,228	\$461	\$216

- Alberta's arts and culture sector contributes \$12 billion in GDP and supports 86,000 jobs. Alberta accounts for more than 60% of Prairies' arts and culture economic impact, driven by the audio-visual and interactive media domain.
- Manitoba's arts and culture sector contributes \$3.6 billion in GDP and supports 34,000 jobs. Visual and applied arts domain contributes \$780 million in GDP and supports nearly 8,000 jobs.
- Saskatchewan's arts and culture sector contributes \$2.2 billion in GDP and supports 20,000 jobs. Governance, funding and professional support is the largest domain contributing \$783 million in GDP and supporting 6,000 jobs. This domain is responsible for grant services in cultural organizations and arts programming run by government entities.

Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.

Note: 2023 provincial impact data, with all figures in current dollars. Total GDP and jobs includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Data from territories and outside of Canada not included. Tax revenue includes federal and provincial personal and corporate tax.

Spotlight: Melfort Arts Council

Since its founding in 1975, the Melfort Arts Council (MAC) has been a pillar of the local arts community. Nestled in East-Central Saskatchewan, Melfort is a rural agricultural hub with a deep sense of community pride.

In 2020, a group of dedicated volunteers began rebuilding MAC, transforming it into a thriving organization in just four short years. From fostering community engagement to supporting both the visual and performing arts, MAC is growing its impact. "Arts bring camaraderie and belonging to our community," shared Karen Eckhart, Performing Arts Chair, emphasizing the importance of making arts accessible and vital for everyone.

Through their participation in artsvest (see case study page 43), the Melfort Arts Council has taken advantage of resources, training and mentorship. With encouragement from their mentor, the council has envisioned and pursued their "wildest dreams", proposing that Melfort's historic post office should be turned into an arts and culture hub — a project now underway with support from the city.

Looking ahead, MAC plans to continue leveraging artsvest's resources to navigate challenges like governance and fundraising while deepening its relationships with local businesses. Karen highlighted how businesses benefit from supporting the arts, noting that partnerships foster community vitality and mutual connection. *"The arts are for every age and offer something lifelong."*



Atlantic Canada: Highest job growth potential.

Atlantic Canada arts and culture impact (2023)

		Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island
 Jobs	Direct	13,972	7,632	5,052	1,955
	Indirect	4,970	2,204	1,432	617
	Induced	3,374	1,764	1,101	411
	Total	22,316	11,600	7,585	2,983
 GDP (millions \$)	Direct	\$1,181	\$662	\$522	\$148
	Indirect	\$747	\$352	\$262	\$85
	Induced	\$630	\$325	\$235	\$72
	Total	\$2,558	\$1,339	\$1,019	\$305
 Tax revenue (millions \$)		\$331	\$139	\$113	\$36

- **Arts and culture in Atlantic provinces have the highest jobs multipliers (16 jobs per \$1 million in output) compared to the national average of 13 jobs.** Governance, funding and professional support account for most of the Atlantic culture industry.
- Nova Scotia's arts and culture sector is the largest out of Atlantic provinces, contributing \$2.6 billion in GDP and supporting 22,000 jobs.
- New Brunswick's arts and culture sector contributes \$1.3 billion in GDP and supports 12,000 jobs.
- Newfoundland and Labrador's arts and culture sector contributes \$1 billion in GDP and supports nearly 8,000 jobs.
- Prince Edward Island's arts and culture sector contributes \$305 million in GDP and supports 3,000 jobs.

Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: 2023 provincial impact data, with all figures in current dollars. Total GDP and jobs includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Data from territories and outside of Canada not included. Tax revenue includes federal and provincial personal and corporate tax.

Consumer and Export Trends in Arts and Culture



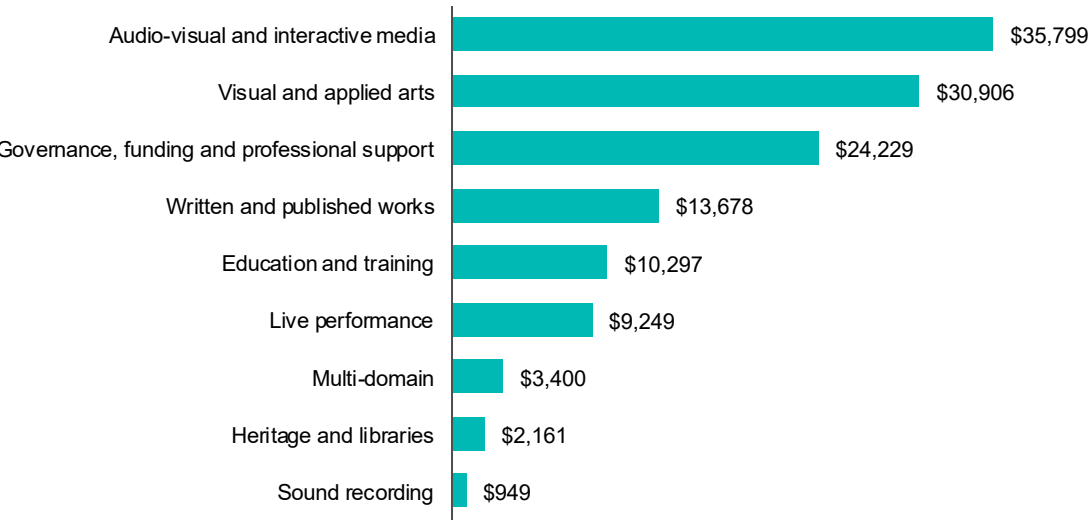
Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. Deer Lake Park, Burnaby, BC. July 13, 2024

Most culture domains are experiencing fast growth.

The audio-visual and interactive media domain is by far Canada’s largest cultural domain thanks to strong film, television and video-game industries. Its growth, however, is below the average in recent quarters, likely due to headwinds from the U.S. film industry. Visual and applied arts, and governance, funding and professional support also generate sizeable GDP and growth around 4%. At the other end of the scale, heritage and library activities contribute a small share (about \$2.2 billion) but are expanding rapidly (6% growth), reflecting renewed interest in museums and archives and increased support for digitizing heritage materials. Multi-domain projects grew the fastest at nearly 7%, but written and published works has shrunk (-1.6%) since 2011, mirroring declines in print media as consumers shift to digital content.

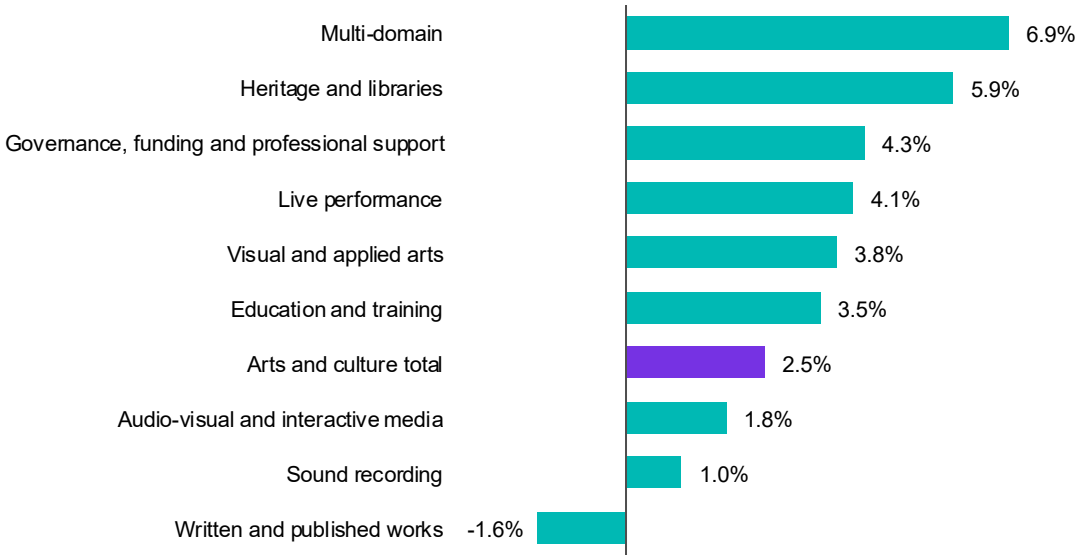
Audio-visual and interactive media is the largest domain

2024 total GDP impact, millions of Canadian dollars



Heritage and libraries growing at twice the overall sector

% change in direct GDP growth, 2011–2024



Sources: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: Total Impact include direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Multi-domain was excluded from the growth chart.

Participation is driven by learning and experiences.



Key trends from “culture-goers”

May 2025 Arts Response Tracking Survey

● Seeking novel experiences

Canadians strongly prefer unique, new experiences, aligning with the *Culture Track* findings that cite fun, discovery and learning as key motivators.

● Cultural engagement remains strong

78% of Canadians find arts and cultural experiences as or more important than last year, with only 11% reporting decreased interest.

● Content drives decision-making

Interest in content/artist (49%) is the primary driver for event selection, far outweighing big-name attractions (12%) and convenient locations (11%).

● Representation matters

Barriers to participation include perceived relevance and representation, with Indigenous peoples and people of colour more likely to avoid activities that don't reflect diverse backgrounds.

Top “out-of-town” cultural events from culture-goers

(% of respondents)



Performance
60%



**Historic or
heritage site**
52%



Music festival
41%



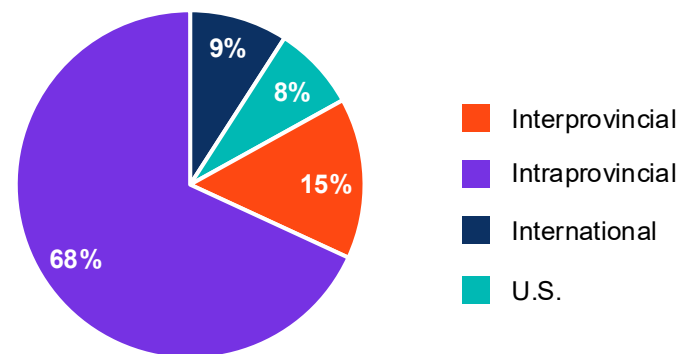
**Museum or
art gallery**
38%



**Food/drink
festival**
29%

Live music tourism spending, 2023

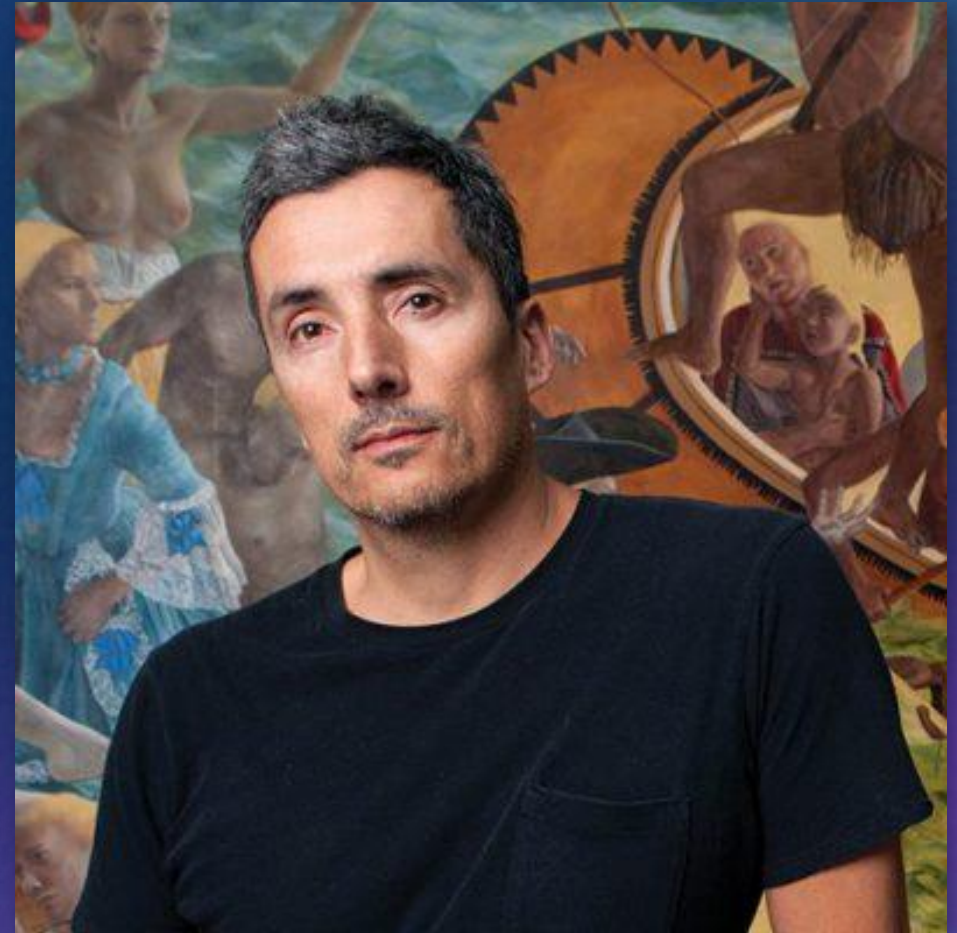
By source



Spotlight: Kent Monkman, O.C.

Kent Monkman is a groundbreaking Cree artist whose interventions into Western art history explore colonization, sexuality and resilience. His gender-fluid alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, reclaims space for Indigenous narratives and identities.

Monkman's artworks confront viewers with the history of the residential school system and have generated increased focus and attention on Truth and Reconciliation. His international career has opened doors for other Indigenous artists and advanced their concerns within Canadian cultural institutions.



Despite a trade deficit, cultural exports are growing.

Canadian international trade in cultural goods and services reached an all-time high in 2022, with \$24.5 billion sold to foreign customers. Cultural exports have doubled since 2011, with some categories outperforming the overall arts and culture sector. Canadians purchased \$31.9 billion of foreign cultural goods and services in 2022, resulting in a trade deficit of \$7.3 billion. Canada has maintained a trade deficit, though some sub-sectors post trade surpluses.

Top cultural exports by value (2022)

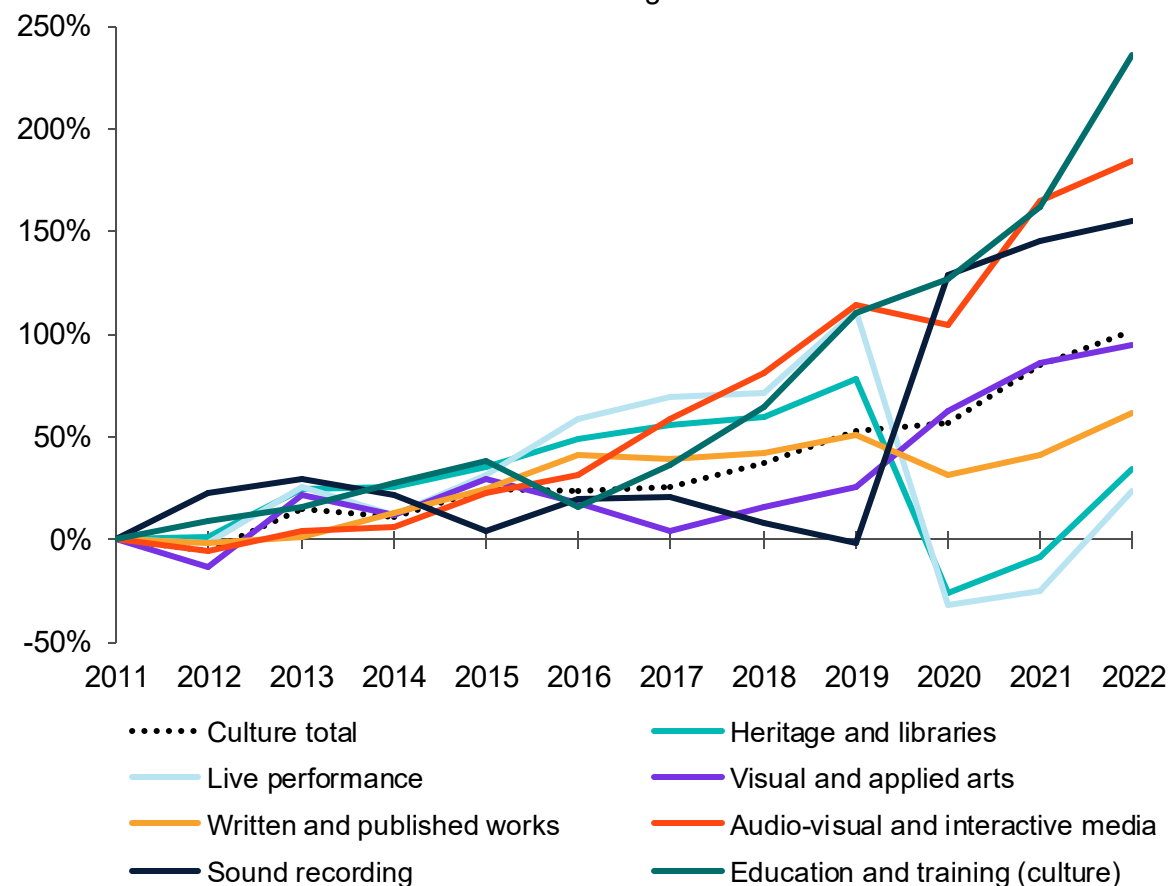
1. Visual and applied arts (i.e. crafts, design, advertising): \$10.2 billion
2. Audio visual and interactive media (i.e. film and media): \$7.9 billion
3. Written and published works: \$2.1 billion

One strong export category over the past decade has been education and training, growing on average 13% over the period. The Ontario College of Arts and Design University (OCAD) is a great example of Canada's roots in providing training to visual artists, as the sub-sector is approaching \$1 billion in foreign sales.

Audio-visual and interactive media, education and training, and governance, funding, and professional support have held steady trade surpluses. Most cultural exports come from Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec, which together account for 93% of cultural exports.

Export performance of Canadian cultural products

Cumulative % change since 2011



Expanding cultural diplomacy through exports.

Canada's cultural diplomacy through arts, education and exchange has historically been central to Canada's foreign policy, diversity, inclusion and creativity abroad. Canada's experience hosting international cultural events, like Expo '67 in Montréal and in the cities of Paris and London, could be useful in asserting Canada's cultural assets and building international influence amid pressure to diversify beyond the U.S.

By leveraging its multicultural identity and creative industries, Canada can strengthen people-to-people ties and economic partnerships in regions like Europe. OCAD University's partnership with the Delegation of the European Union to Canada via DemocracyXChange strengthens these ties, reinforcing the role of culture in shaping a vibrant, open society.

The EU prioritizes cultural cooperation as essential to democracy and resilience. Shared values, languages, and trade agreements such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) make Europe a strategic partner where Canadian culture can reinforce diplomatic relationships. The Canadian government's [Creative Export Canada program](#) announced in 2018 can further support cultural products and services in reaching new markets.

Top cultural export markets, 2022



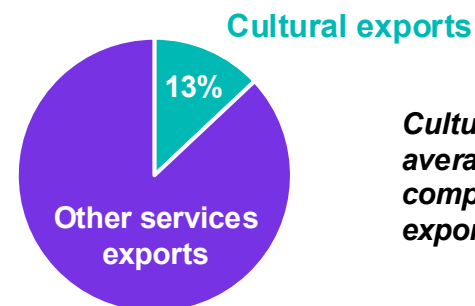
1. United States (\$16.8B)



2. United Kingdom (\$0.9B)



3. France (\$0.6B)



Cultural exports grew at an annual average rate of 7% from 2011 to 2022, compared to Canada's 5% overall export growth.

Spotlight: Margaret Atwood, C.C.

Margaret Atwood is one of the most celebrated authors in Canadian history. Having published over 50 books, translated into more than 45 languages, her work has shaped global discourse on democracy, power and the environment.

Professor Evan Potter notes in *Margaret Atwood Inc.: A Force Multiplier in Canadian Literary Diplomacy and Cultural Statecraft*, that for 60 years programs like the Canada Book Fund have been used to promote Canadians' literary work abroad. Atwood is a global ambassador at international festivals helping to promote Canada's image, reinforce bilateral diplomatic relations and promote Canadian values and perspectives globally.



Credit: Photo by Jean Malek

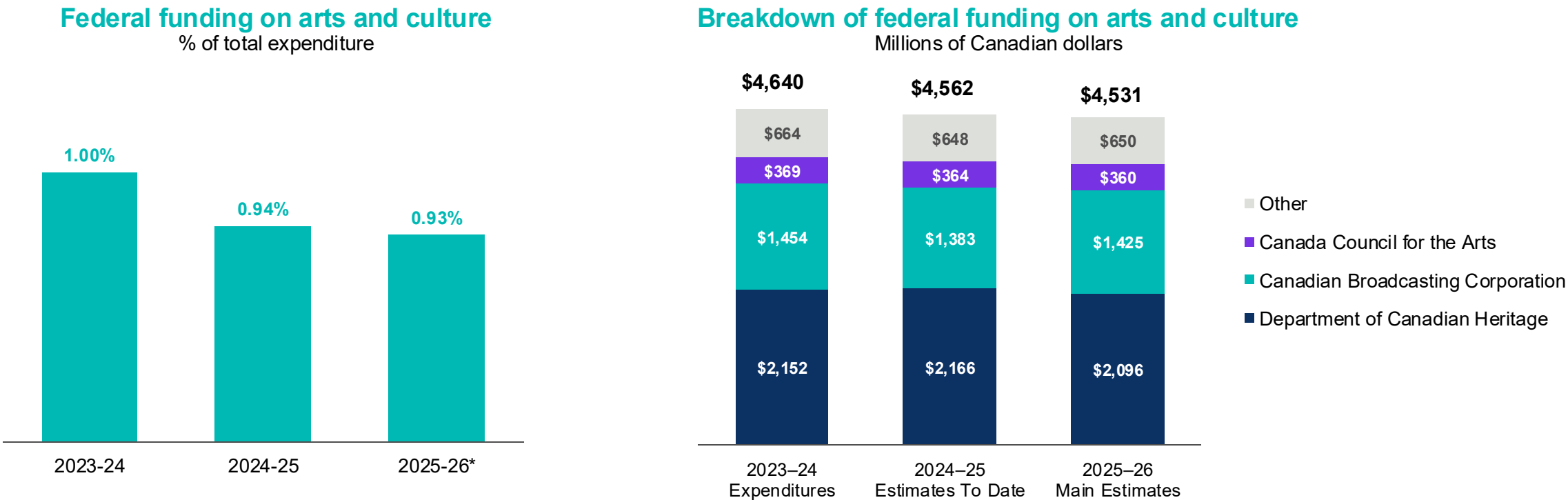
Conditions for Success: The Case for Increased Investment in Arts and Culture



Credit: Ottawa Tourism

Federal funding for arts and culture keeps slipping.

The government's allocation* to arts, culture, and heritage is declining as a share of total federal spending. Portfolio dollars are modestly lower in 2025–26 Main Estimates versus 2023–24 actuals. Funding allocation is concentrated in the Department of Canadian Heritage, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Canada Council for the Arts. Although the composition has been stable, lower overall funding translates directly into smaller funding allocation to arts and culture organizations.



*2025–26 figures are Main Estimates. Other category includes Canadian Tourism Commission, Canadian Museum of Nature, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Canadian Museum of History, Canadian Museum of Human Rights, National Gallery of Canada, National Film Board, National Museum of Science and Technology, National Arts Centre Corporation, Telefilm Canada

Source: BDL analysis using [2025-26 Government of Canada estimates](#).

Overview of the 2023–24 funding allocation.

\$309M

in grants and funding initiatives

8%



Federal funding allocated to the Canada Council for the Arts is 8% of total federal expenditure on arts and culture.

In the 2023–24 funding period, over **3,500** Canadian artists, nearly **500** groups, and over **2,000** arts organizations received funding support from the Canada Council for the Arts.



Credit: Open House at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Toronto, ON. Photo by Allan Cabral

Spotlight: Edward Burtynsky, O.C.

Edward Burtynsky is among the world's most acclaimed contemporary photographers. His large-scale images, which are held in over 80 major museums, have sparked global conversations on sustainability, climate and industry.

Burtynsky received his first grant from the Canada Council in 1982. "Early support from the Canada Council for the Arts allowed Burtynsky to continue his practice at a time when large-scale colour photography was expensive and relatively rare. He has often credited these grants with enabling him to pursue the kind of work that brought him international recognition." (Canada Council, Artist Spotlight, archived feature, c. 2018)

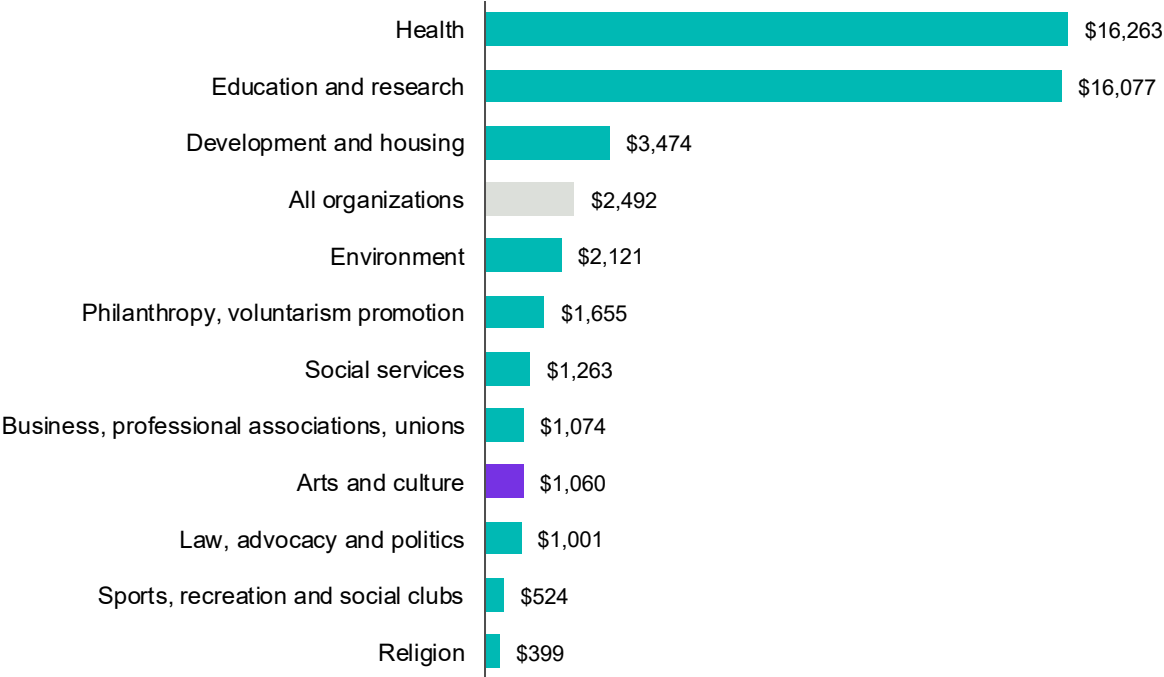
In turn, Burtynsky supports the next generation with the Burtynsky Grant, an annual award managed by Contact Photography Festival for a lens-based artist.



Credit: Photo by Christopher Michel

Arts and culture organizations have limited resources.

Average revenue of non-profit organizations
2022, thousands



Arts and culture non-profits have relatively lower revenue compared with other non-profits due to having a smaller organization footprint. Unlike other sectors in health, social services, or religion, that receive higher private funding and operate much larger organizations, arts and culture has limited financial resources and would rely more heavily on revenue-generating activities.

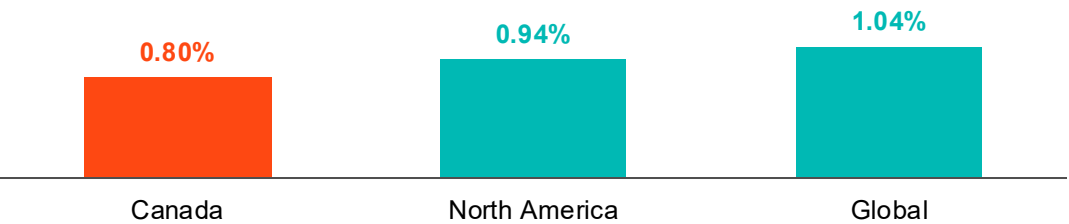
The *Arts Community Pulse Survey* (2024) highlighted that most organizations think their financial security has been unstable in the past two years and noted decreases to their total income or revenue and increases to their total expenses in the past year. This is especially an issue for organizations who have high fixed operating costs due to venues or facilities.

Workforce capacity is also limited in the arts and culture sector. The sector relies heavily on freelancers and self-employed artists (~66% compared to 14% economy-wide, 2021). Artists also earn less than other workers (2021 median: \$30,200 vs \$49,600); roughly 40% lower, which compounds retention and affordability pressures.

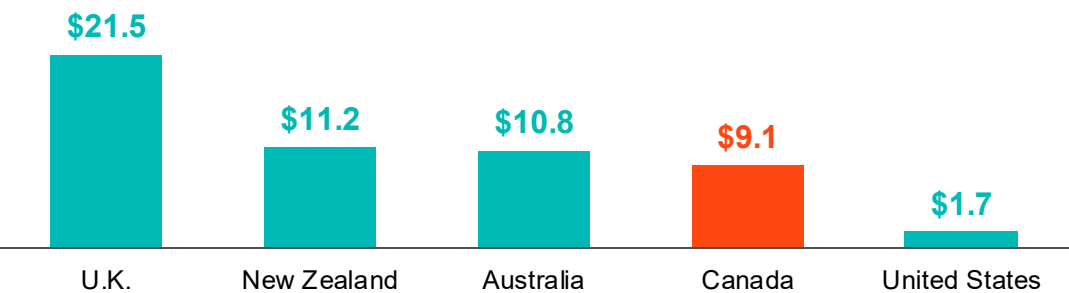
Sources: [Q1 2024 Canadian Survey on Business Conditions](#); [Estimates of active non-profit organizations](#); [Arts Community Pulse Survey 2024](#); [Hill Strategies](#); [Hill Strategies](#); [Hill Strategies](#)
Notes: Non-profit organization categories are based on international definitions and may differ from the cultural satellite account. Does not denote organization's charitable status.

Canada has a public and private giving gap.

Canadians generally donate less of their income
Average % of income donated



Comparison of peer country arts council funding
2024 allocation per capita



The combination of both public and private funding is crucial to supporting arts and culture programs in Canada. With the relative decline in private contributions, arts councils are under increased strain to allocate funds to keep projects afloat. Unfortunately, public funding has stagnated or is on the decline, with Canada’s arts council funding only \$9.1 on a per capita basis, compared to peer countries like the U.K. at \$21.5, or Australia’s \$10.8.

While many Canadians indicate through surveys they donate to charity, the average amount is lower than peer countries, especially when compared to the United States, with Canadians allocating only 0.8% of their income, compared to the North American average of 0.94%. A much smaller portion of their income is destined for the arts and culture sector (~11% overall), which generally goes to larger organizations with development staff.

Filling this gap requires knowledge. Many Canadians are not aware of the financial difficulties that face artists and culture organizations. About one-third of arts participants (November 2024) who donate would donate more if they were aware of the immediate need or crisis in the sector. With social impact being a key driver behind the reason for donating and the immense benefits the sector offers, more education could support diversified funding goals.

Sources: BDL analysis of Statistics Canada Tables: 11-10-0003-01, 11-10-0130-01; 2025 [World Giving Report](#); OECD population data (2023); [Arts Response Tracking Survey](#), November 2024; Funding sources (UK Arts Council, U.S. NEA and NEH, Canada Council for the Arts, Creative Australia, Creative New Zealand)
Notes: Converted to Canadian dollars using 2024 averages via Bank of Canada rates. Estimates for national arts council funding do not account for different jurisdiction programming and funding models.

Spotlight: Sarah McLachlan, O.C.

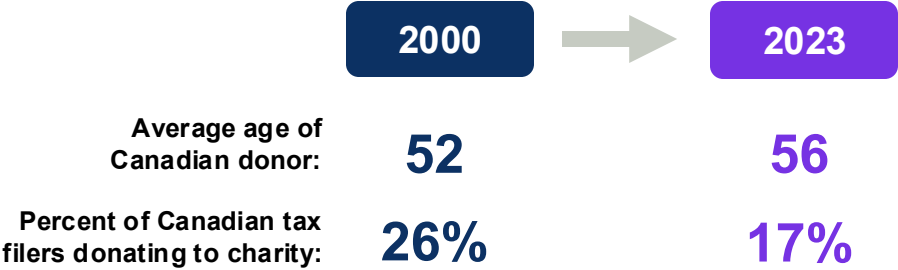
Sarah McLachlan is one of Canada's most beloved musical icons and the creator of the groundbreaking Lilith Fair tour, which showcased female musicians and raised over \$7 million for local and national women's charities. A committed philanthropist, she founded the Sarah McLachlan School of Music, which offers free, high-quality music education to at-risk and underserved children and youth facing barriers to access.

For her many charitable endeavours, McLachlan has received the Juno's Humanitarian Award, the Allan Slaight Humanitarian Spirit Award and a Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement. McLachlan is a strong advocate for music education and music's vital role in forging social connection, healing and joy.



Canadian donations are on the decline.

Canadian taxable charitable donations

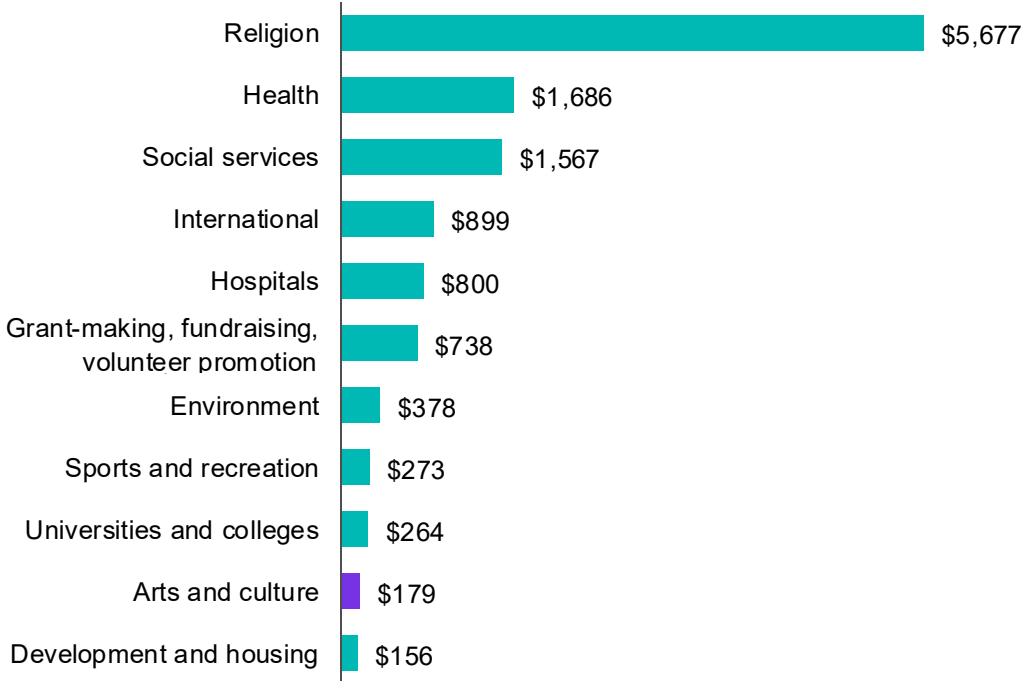


Current challenges

- Only 17% of Canadian tax filers reported charitable donations in 2023, down from 26% in 2000.
- The average age of the Canadian donor increased to 56 in 2023, up from 52 in 2000, as younger donors cite affordability for not contributing.
- Arts and culture are not a top priority for donations, with total private donations in second last place, following universities and colleges.
- Based on the 2025 *World Giving Report* for Canada, nearly 20% of respondents said they would give more to charity if the tax benefits were greater.

Donations to charitable and non-profit organizations

Average value of donations*, millions, 2023 constant dollars

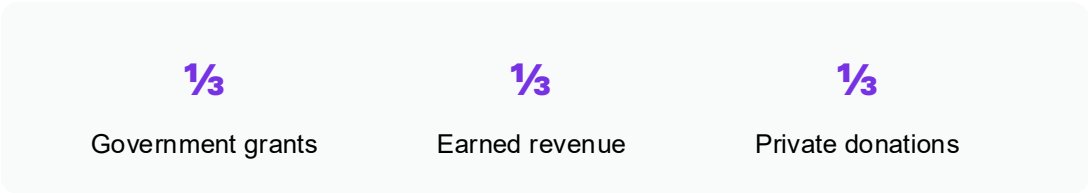


Sources: BDL analysis based on Statistics Canada tables 18-10-0006-01, 11-10-0002-01; 2025 [World Giving Report](#); *Survey on Giving, Volunteering, and Participating*, 2023; *General Social Survey*, 2018 ([link](#)).

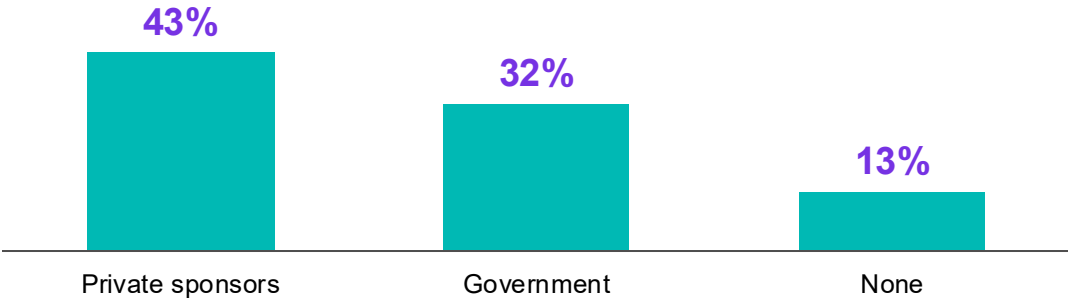
Notes: *Average of 2018 and 2023 survey responses by category. Does not denote organization's charitable status. Sectors with poor data quality excluded. Non-profit organization categories are based on international definitions.

Public and private investment work together.

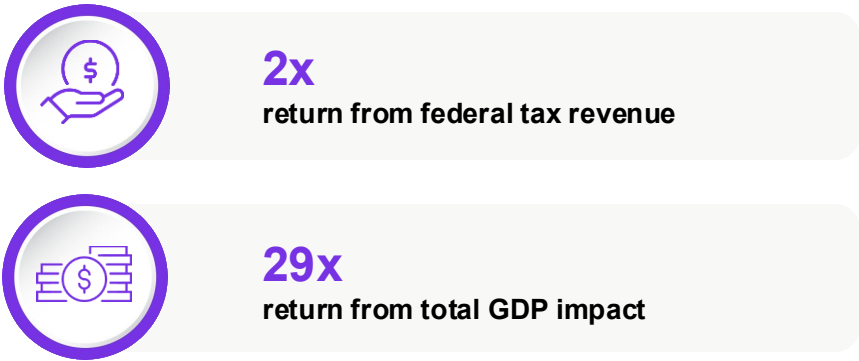
Typical funding model for arts and culture organizations



Culture-goers see funding for free admission as a shared responsibility.



Federal investment in the arts delivers exceptional returns



Arts and culture organizations traditionally rely on a tripartite funding model that is shared between government, private capital, and self-generated earned revenue.

Culture-goers in the September 2025 *Arts Response Tracking Survey* were asked about the responsibility of funding free admission to arts and culture events, galleries and museums. Forty-three per cent indicated that private sponsors were mainly responsible. Nearly one-third of culture-goers indicated that government was mainly responsible. Based on federal culture spending, the federal government receives two times their money back in tax revenue, which totalled \$9 billion in 2024.

Conclusion

Canada's arts and culture sector is an economic engine and an asset to all Canadians' quality-of-life. In 2024, the sector contributed \$131 billion to Canada's GDP in total (\$65 billion directly, representing 2% of the economy) and has outpaced growth in other key sectors over the past decade. Arts and culture supports 1.1 million jobs in Canada through its total economic impact across the country. The arts and culture sector also supports government revenue, with an estimated \$17 billion in federal and provincial tax revenue generated. The sector generates 29x the federal investment it receives in economic activity, returning twice the investment solely on federal tax paid by the sector.

In the September 2025 *Arts Response Tracking Survey*, three-quarters of culture-goers reported arts participation positively impacting their sense of belonging, with distinctive experiences driving decisions. Internationally, cultural exports have doubled since 2011, reaching \$25 billion in 2022. This combination of domestic participation and growing international trade points to a sector with expanding opportunity.

Realizing that opportunity requires addressing structural challenges. Public funding is slipping as a share of federal allocation, while the sector's traditional tripartite model (grants, earned revenue, private giving) faces headwinds from a giving gap and rising costs. Many organizations operate with lean teams and limited financial buffers. Yet the evidence through programs like artsvest by Business / Arts, suggest public capital leads to further capital through private sector matching. Increasing public funding, an investment in Canada's arts and culture sector, will strengthen its resilience and ensure continued socio-economic benefits for Canadians, both now and in the future.



Calls to action



Increased business investment is needed to support revenue diversification of arts and culture organizations by contributing to matching programs, utilizing tax credits, and supporting funding initiatives to close the giving gap.



An increased public investment in the arts, at all levels of government, is essential for the arts sector to deliver the fullest possible social, cultural and economic benefits for Canadians.

Case study: The U.K.'s experience with impact investing.

Impact investing channels capital to organizations that deliver both financial and social returns, using repayable finance alongside grants — a relatively new concept, and more so with respect to the culture sector. The U.K. has one of the world's most developed social-investment ecosystems for arts and culture. In 2015, Nesta and Arts Council England, with public and private partners, launched the Arts Impact Fund, creating a new repayable-finance funding source for cultural organizations/companies. The model has since expanded into three funds, and in 2024 Arts & Culture Finance (ACF), now Figurative, manages this creative-investment portfolio (e.g., the Arts & Culture Impact Fund and Cultural Impact Development Fund).

Evidence from the U.K. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (2023) evaluated the funds between 2015–2023 and showed typical financial returns in the 1–5% range on ACF investments. Longer investment horizons (usually five years), compared to grants funding, give organizations room to take sensible risk and plan growth. Eighty-one per cent of investees said investor guidance was at least moderately useful for evaluating impact, and over half reported improvements on 8 out of 9 organizational-resilience metrics.

Impact investing can help supplement arts funding in Canada. The U.K. has experimented with some success this shared model of public and private funding. However, the U.K. also has one of the most developed funding system which includes strong private philanthropy.

U.K.'s first Arts Impact Fund

Fund characteristics:

- Blended capital: public, private and charitable repayable finance for arts organizations.
- Debt-focused investments with less asset requirements.
- Focus on social impact and resilience measurement.

55

Cultural organizations funded*

£30 million

Total capital raised*

3.4%

Write-off rate of deployed capital

50%+

Improved financial resilience

Select U.K. impact investment success stories

Soho Theatre Player:

VOD platform launched with AIF loan, creating new revenue streams.

Village Underground/Earth:

£600,000 investment to expand music venues and education facilities.

Sources: [Impact Investing in the Creative and Culture Sectors](#); Figurative; QCAD Cultural Policy Hub

Note: *As of September 9, 2025, on Figurative's impact figures. Write-off is when an investment is considered a loss.

Artsvest Saskatchewan: A high-impact capacity building model.

Artsvest, Business / Arts' signature mentorship and training program, has over 20 years of demonstrated success in building the capacity of Canada's cultural sector. Launched in 2005, the program focuses on small to mid-sized organizations across the country, with a particular focus on rural, remote and equity-deserving communities.

As of January 2025, 7,350 representatives from 3,260 organizations have participated, completing over 26,000 hours of training and mentorship. The program has resulted in 6,403 new business partnerships and \$28.25 million in private-sector investment. Including regional matching funds, the total impact reaches \$39.3 million.

Saskatchewan offers a great example of the focused long-term impact of artsvest. Business / Arts has delivered artsvest in Saskatchewan since 2011, offering in-depth training and mentorship to support sponsorship, fund development, board governance, and organizational resilience.

Arts organizations receive provincial matching funds as a direct incentive for establishing new business partnerships, increasing their total sponsorship revenue. Since 2011, the program has generated over \$10 million in economic impact for Saskatchewan's cultural sector.

In 2024, artsvest Saskatchewan achieved a 296% return on investment: The province's \$100,000 contribution leveraged \$296,000 from local businesses, generating a total direct impact of \$371,000 from sponsorships and matching funds.

Across the province, artsvest helps create approximately 90 new sponsor partnerships each year, with more than half coming from brand-new relationships. Sponsorships range from \$200 to \$40,000, demonstrating engagement from both small businesses and larger corporations.



Credit: Melfort Arts Council

Annex



National domain impact summary

Culture Domains	GDP impact (millions \$)	Jobs impact	Tax revenue (millions \$)
Heritage and libraries	\$2,161	30,254	\$248
Live performance	\$9,249	104,111	\$894
Visual and applied arts	\$30,906	257,800	\$3,646
Written and published works	\$13,678	161,157	\$2,116
Audio-visual and interactive media	\$35,799	291,249	\$5,366
Sound recording	\$949	8,766	\$176
Education and training	\$10,297	86,130	\$871
Governance, funding and professional support	\$24,229	166,216	\$2,758
Multi-domain	\$3,400	22,210	\$440
Culture industries, total	\$130,667	1,127,893	\$16,514

Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding. Impact numbers include direct, indirect, and induced impact.

Tax revenue includes personal and corporate taxes from provincial and federal jurisdictions.

Provincial impact overview

Region	GDP impact (millions \$)	Jobs impact	Tax revenue (millions \$)
Alberta	\$11,798	86,169	\$1,228
British Columbia	\$23,590	211,473	\$2,894
Manitoba	\$3,607	33,822	\$461
New Brunswick	\$1,339	11,600	\$139
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$1,019	7,585	\$113
Nova Scotia	\$2,558	22,316	\$331
Ontario	\$60,140	458,048	\$7,331
Prince Edward Island	\$305	2,983	\$36
Quebec	\$28,525	264,651	\$3,263
Saskatchewan	\$2,185	19,659	\$216
Canada (2024)	\$130,667	1,127,893	\$16,514

Source: BDL analysis using Statistics Canada data.
Note: The sum of the provincial impacts does not equal the Canadian total because the provincial estimates are based on 2023 data, while the national figures are based on 2024 data. All figures are in current dollars. Total GDP includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Data from territories and outside of Canada not included. Tax revenue includes federal and provincial personal and corporate tax.

Defining arts and culture in Canada

Culture Satellite Account (CSA) domains	Description
Heritage and libraries	Archives, libraries, cultural heritage (museums, galleries, artifacts, historic sites) and natural heritage (gardens, aquaria, zoos, parks, reserves, conservation areas).
Live performance	Performing arts (theatre, opera, dance, music, circuses) and festivals/celebrations with live performances, along with related events, fairs, and promoter services.
Visual and applied arts	Original visual art, art reproductions, photography, and crafts such as textiles, pottery, jewellery, furniture, and instruments.
Written and published works	Books, periodicals, newspapers, and other published works in all formats, plus related fairs, festivals, and events.
Audio-visual and interactive media	Film and video, broadcasting, and interactive media across all formats and platforms.
Sound recording	Sound recording (services, production, distribution) and music publishing (composition, formats, and rights).
Multi-domain categories	
Education and training	Cultural programs offered at educational and training establishments including elementary and secondary schools, community colleges and CEGEPs, universities, technical, vocational and trade schools and fine arts schools.
Governance, funding, and professional supports	Grant-making and giving services of culture organizations, and government entities at the federal, provincial, and municipal level providing programs related to arts and culture.
Multi-domain	Covers more than one domain and cannot be readily allocated to a single domain.

Industry classification concordance

North American Industry Classification (NAIC) categories	NAICS industry code	IOIC code	CSA domain
Performing arts, spectator sports and related industries, and heritage institutions	71A	BS71A000	Live performance
Specialized design services	5414	BS541400	Visual and applied arts
Architectural, engineering and related services	5413	BS541300	Visual and applied arts
Advertising, public relations, and related services	5418	BS541800	Visual and applied arts
Newspaper, periodical, book and directory publishers	5111	BS5111A0	Written and published Works
Radio and television broadcasting	5151	BS515100	Audio-visual and interactive media
Sound recording industries	512	BS512000	Audio-visual and interactive media and sound recording
Lessors of non-financial intangible assets (except copyrighted works)	533	BS533000	Multi-domain
Printing and related support activities	323	BS323000	Visual and applied arts
Miscellaneous store retailers (except cannabis)	453A	BS453A00	Visual and applied arts

IOIC: Input-Output Industry Classifications

Methodology

Methodology

The report is based on the Culture Satellite Account (CSA), by which Statistics Canada categorizes the culture sector into six broad domains, namely, heritage and libraries, live performances, visual and applied arts, written and published works, audio-visual and interactive media, and sound recording, which are further categorized into 19 sub-domains. There are also three transversal domains; education and training, governance, funding, and professional support, and multi-domain. CSA measures the economic importance of the culture and arts industry, classified by NAICS, by estimating their contribution to federal and provincial GDP, output and jobs.

BDL used the CSA as the direct economic impact in nominal Canadian dollars. To analyze the indirect and induced economic impacts of the arts and culture sector, BDL used supply-use tables from Statistics Canada industry accounts, which employs IOIC industry classification. The concordance between NAICS and IOIC are provided in the annex. The IOIC multipliers from the supply-use tables are matched with the CSA account categories to determine impact.

National estimates are based on 2024 annualized quarterly data, whereas provincial estimates are 2023. For that reason, the aggregation of provinces to national figures will not add up. Sports and related activities were not included in this study.

Sources: Statistics Canada Tables 36-10-0652-01, 36-10-0453-01, 36-10-0594-01, 36-10-0595-01.

Definitions

Output: Consists of those goods or services that are produced within an establishment that become available for use outside that establishment, plus any goods and services produced for own final use.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Is defined as the total unduplicated value of the goods and services produced in the economic territory of a country or region during a given period.

Jobs: The number of full-time equivalent jobs in the culture and non-culture industries related to the production of all culture goods and services across the economy.

Direct impact: Impact that is directly attributable to the arts and culture organization, facility or event operations.

Indirect impact: The impact attributed to the changes in the demand of businesses in the arts and culture supply-chain that provide the goods and services to arts and culture organizations.

Induced impact: The impact attributed to workers both directly and indirectly throughout the arts and culture supply chain, who spend their wages buying goods and services elsewhere (i.e. groceries, gasoline, haircuts, etc.).

Provincial tax revenues: Revenues collected by the provincial government accrued by taxing total labour income and corporate income.

Federal tax revenues: Revenues collected by the federal governments accrued by taxing total labour income and corporate income.

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