

# CANADA'S CULTURAL SECTOR LABOUR FORCE



Cultural  
Human Resources  
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des ressources humaines  
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# CANADA'S CULTURAL SECTOR LABOUR FORCE

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Canada

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study focuses on the arts, culture and heritage labour force in Canada based largely on data from the 2001 census. Rather than delving into a significant analysis of this segment of the labour force, this study presents detailed, reliable and recent statistics on the arts, culture and heritage labour force. A separate document from the Cultural Human Resources Council will address a human resources development strategy for the cultural sector.

### CONTEXT OF THIS REPORT

This project flows from a recent report on human resource issues in Canada's cultural sector. The Cultural Human Resources Council report, *Face of the Future*, noted that statistics are required for planning, advocacy and policy-making in the cultural sector, especially regarding "the structure and evolution of the cultural sector and its workforce at the national, provincial, regional and municipal levels". The report also noted that "there is a dearth of data on the composition of the cultural labour force in terms of equity issues such as gender, race and ethnocultural background, disabilities and so on".<sup>1</sup>

This study aims to fill many of these gaps by providing reliable data and significant information on many aspects of Canada's cultural labour force. This study presents statistics concerning:

- the size of the cultural labour force;
- the earnings of cultural workers;

- the size and earnings of the cultural workforce in each province and territory;
- the size and earnings of the cultural workforce in Canada's 27 Census Metropolitan Areas;
- breakdowns of the cultural labour force by sex, age, class of worker, education, immigration status, visible minority status, Aboriginal identity and language; and
- trends in the cultural labour force over the last 30 years.

There has been much interest recently in reports examining the personal, societal and economic benefits of cultural activities, including the impacts of culture on health, education and the quality of life.<sup>2</sup> In addition to being a source of

<sup>1</sup> Quotes taken from p. 39 and p. 19 of *Face of the Future*.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, a March 1999 study that discussed a Socio-economic Benefits Framework, Cultural Sector, prepared for the National Arts Centre, the National Capital Commission and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

enjoyment for many Canadians, the arts, culture and heritage may be linked to economic growth. One recent study argued that “creativity has replaced raw materials or natural harbours as the crucial wellspring of economic growth. To be successful in this emerging creative age, regions must develop, attract and retain talented and creative people who generate innovations, develop technology-intensive industries and power economic growth.”<sup>3</sup>

If these arguments are correct, the statistics on the cultural labour force presented in this study may be seen not just a sign of cultural activity but also as a significant factor in the well-being of Canadians and in the country’s future economic growth.

In this report, the cultural sector labour force includes those Canadians 15 or older in any of 45 occupation codes considered cultural. These occupations, listed in an appendix to this Executive Summary, include heritage occupations (such as librarians, curators and archivists), cultural occupations (such as graphic designers, print operators, editors, translators and architects), and

artistic occupations. The nine artistic occupations tracked by the Canada Council for the Arts are: 1) writers; 2) producers, directors, choreographers and related occupations; 3) conductors, composers and arrangers; 4) musicians and singers; 5) dancers; 6) actors; 7) painters, sculptors and other visual artists; 8) other performers; and 9) artisans and craftspersons.

Detailed notes on the methodology used to estimate the figures in this study are presented at the end of this Executive Summary.

## FINDINGS

The three most striking characteristics of the cultural sector labour force are a high level of education, a high rate of self-employment, and relatively low earnings, especially for self-employed artists. The statistics presented in this study also demonstrate that the arts, culture and heritage labour force is a unique, important and fast-growing segment of the overall labour force in Canada.

Regarding the overall size of the cultural sector labour force, this study has found that:

- The cultural sector has about 516,000 workers and comprises 3.1% of the total labour force in Canada.
- One in every 32 people in Canada has a cultural occupation.
- The cultural sector labour force is about 20% larger than the number of Canadians working in computer-related occupations.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Competing on Creativity: Placing Ontario’s Cities in a North American Context*, Meric S. Gertler, Richard Florida, Gary Gates and Tara Vinodrai, 2002, p. ii.

<sup>4</sup> According to the 2001 census report *The changing profile of Canada’s labour force*, “the census counted 406,700 persons in computer-related occupations in 2001.... These professions included analysts, consultants, programmers, website developers, [and] software writers.” Catalogue no. 96F0030XIE2001009, released February 11, 2003.

- The nine arts occupations account for 130,700 workers, or 25% of the cultural labour force and 0.8% of the total Canadian labour force.
- The 2001 census counted almost three times as many dancers in educational services than in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry group. The census also found more musicians and singers working in educational services than in arts, entertainment and recreation.
- The industry group employing the most cultural workers — information and cultural industries — includes publishing, motion pictures, sound recording, broadcasting, tele-communications, information services and data processing services.

Concerning the earnings of cultural workers, statistics prepared for this study show that:

- Incomes are relatively low in the cultural sector, with average earnings in the cultural sector (\$29,951) being about 6% lower than average earnings in the total labour force in Canada (\$31,757).
- The \$15.5 billion in total earnings in the cultural sector represents 3.0% of total earnings in the Canadian labour force.
- There are significant variations, along many lines, between the 45 occupations that comprise the cultural sector labour force. For example, average earnings vary significantly between different cultural sector occupations.
- The lowest paid occupations in the cultural sector are among the worst paid of any occupations in the entire labour force. Of over 500 occupation groups captured by the census, only 23 have average earnings that are lower than the lowest paid cultural occupation — library clerks. Only 27 have average earnings that are lower than the second lowest paid cultural occupation — dancers.
- Economic returns to higher education are much more limited in the cultural sector than in the labour force as a whole.
- Some cultural workers, despite high education levels and significant hours worked in a typical week, earn a low hourly rate of income.
- A key factor in the relatively low earnings in the cultural sector labour force is the situation of self-employed cultural workers. Self-employed cultural workers earn, on average, 28% less than self-employed workers in the overall labour force and about 32% less than cultural workers who have a paid employment position.
- The average earnings in artistic occupations (\$23,500) are particularly low. The economic situation of artists is therefore a significant concern in the nation's cultural labour force.
- Another significant factor in the relatively low earnings in the cultural sector labour force is the situation of female cultural workers. For women in the cultural sector, average earnings in 2000 were 29% lower than average earnings of men.

- Earnings of Aboriginal and visible minority cultural workers are low. These low earnings reflect the difficult employment situation for these groups in Canada's overall labour force.
- Despite 10% growth in average earnings in the cultural sector between the 1996 and 2001 census years, earnings in the cultural sector labour force remain lower than earnings in the overall labour force. The growth in cultural sector earnings was slightly higher than the 9% inflation during this time.

Regarding gender distribution, this study has found that:

- Women account for almost exactly one-half of the cultural labour force (49.8%), a percentage that is higher than the equivalent figure for the overall labour force (47%).
- Women have been a driving factor in the growth of the cultural sector labour force between 1971 and 2001, with a quadrupling of the number of female cultural workers during this period.
- The number of men working in the cultural labour force doubled between 1971 and 2001, a growth rate that, although much lower than the quadrupling of the number of

women in the cultural sector workforce, is higher than the growth in the number of men in the overall labour force.

- The cultural occupation groups with the highest proportion of women include three library occupation groups as well as dancers. Two of the cultural occupations with the highest percentage of women, dancers and library clerks, are on the list of lowest-paid cultural occupations.
- The cultural occupation groups that have the highest proportion of men include printing press operators, film and video camera operators, audio and video recording technicians, architects and industrial designers. Two of the cultural occupations with the highest percentage of men, architects and industrial designers, are on the list of highest-paid cultural occupations.

Other socio-demographic characteristics of the cultural labour force include:

- The self-employment rate in Canada's cultural labour force is almost three times higher than the rate in the overall labour force (21% for cultural occupations vs. 8% for the overall labour force).
- Many cultural occupations, especially artistic occupations, have extremely high self-employment rates. One-half or more of workers in three artistic occupations are self-employed, including painters, sculptors and other visual artists (67%), musicians and singers (56%), and artisans and craftspersons (50%).
- Many occupations in libraries and archives have very low self-employment rates.
- Full-time work in the arts is harder to come by than other full-time cultural work, which, in turn, is harder to find than other full-time work.

- Cultural sector workers have high levels of education. Over one-third of cultural workers have completed a university education. This is much higher than the percentage of all workers with a university education (22%). A further 23% of cultural workers have completed a college certificate or diploma, a figure that is higher than the 18% of all workers with this level of education. In contrast, smaller percentages of cultural workers than other workers have trades, high school (only) or less than a high school education.
- The percentage of cultural workers who are under 25 years of age is smaller than the percentage in the overall labour force. This is not surprising given the high levels of education of cultural workers. There is a larger proportion of cultural workers than other workers between 25 and 34 years of age. The percentages of cultural workers in the 35 to 44 and 45 or older age groups are very similar to the percentages in the overall labour force.
- Compared with the overall labour force, the cultural sector labour force has a slightly higher percentage of francophones and a lower proportion of workers with a language other than English or French as their mother tongue. The cultural sector and the overall labour force have the same percentage of anglophones and workers with a combination of mother tongues.
- As a percentage of total workers, the cultural sector labour force has somewhat fewer Aboriginal workers than the overall labour force (1.8% vs. 2.5%).
- The two most common cultural occupations among Aboriginal Canadians are “artisans and craftspersons” and “translators, terminologists and interpreters”.
- There are about 57,000 cultural workers who self-identified in the 2001 census as belonging to a visible minority group. This represents 11% of the cultural sector labour force, a slightly lower percentage than the overall labour force (12%).
- Four out of every five cultural workers were born in Canada. The other 20% of the cultural labour force consists of immigrants to Canada. This percentage is very close to the 19% of all workers who are immigrants.

Regarding the growth of the cultural labour force, statistics prepared for this study show that:

- The cultural sector labour force grew much more quickly than the overall labour force over the last three decades. From 1971 to 2001, the cultural labour force grew by 160%, compared to growth of 81% in the overall labour force.
- The cultural sector labour force grew more quickly than the overall labour force in every decade during this period.

- Between 1996 and 2001, 37 of 45 cultural occupations increased in size.
- The bulk of the recent growth in the cultural sector has come from cultural workers under 25 and those 45 and over. The recent addition of over 10,000 cultural workers under 25 years of age may bode well for the future of the sector.
- Recent growth in the cultural sector has come largely from those with high education levels.
- In every province, the earnings of self-employed cultural workers, largely artists, are well below the earnings of other cultural workers. The economic situation of artists is therefore a significant concern in every province's cultural labour force.
- Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Alberta have between 2.5% and 2.7% of the labour force working in the cultural sector.
- Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island have a cultural sector labour force that accounts for about 2% of the overall labour force.

The study also provides significant information about provincial, territorial and local cultural labour forces:

- Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia, Canada's three largest provinces, have a larger proportion of their workforce employed in cultural occupations than any other province (over 3.3% in all three cases).
- Among the territories, Nunavut has a particularly high percentage of its labour force in cultural occupations (4.8%).
- Quebec is the only province where the average earnings of cultural workers equal the average earnings in the overall provincial labour force.
- Canada's 27 Census Metropolitan Areas account for 66% of the nation's labour force but 79% of its cultural workers.
- Five metropolitan areas, including Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa-Gatineau and Victoria, have a higher proportion of their overall labour force employed in the cultural sector than any other metropolitan area (at least 4.1% in all cases).
- Halifax, Quebec City and Winnipeg also have a cultural sector labour force that represents a greater percentage of the overall labour force than the Canadian figure (3.1%).

## THE FULL REPORT

The full report examines in much greater detail the data on the cultural labour force in Canada, including its size and structure, the earnings of cultural workers, changes in its size between 1971 and 2001, and factors in its recent growth. The report also profiles and compares the cultural sector labour force in each province, territory and Census Metropolitan Area in Canada. Changes between 1991 and 2001 in the size of the cultural labour force in each province are also highlighted.

## METHODOLOGY: COUNTING THE CULTURAL SECTOR LABOUR FORCE

The arts, culture and heritage labour force, frequently shortened to the “cultural sector labour force” or “cultural workers” in this study, is defined as occupations that are considered cultural based on the content of work, rather than the type of employer. That is, this study looks at occupations that are of a cultural nature rather than occupations within cultural industries. This means that a dancer working in an educational setting is included in this definition of the cultural sector labour force, while an accountant working for a cultural facility is not.

The arts, culture and heritage labour force includes those Canadians 15 or older in any of 45 occupation categories considered cultural. These occupation categories were drawn from the 1991 Standard Occupational Classification, based on a custom data request from Statistics Canada.<sup>5</sup> Data available online at Statistics Canada’s website was used to supplement the data from the custom data request. The online data was used mainly to examine breakdowns of cultural workers that were not available in the custom data request and to establish trends in the cultural labour force between 1991 and 2001.<sup>6</sup>

There is not a clear consensus as to the definition of the cultural sector labour force.<sup>7</sup> This is unlike most other industries, where “obtaining data for analysis of employment, labour market conditions, incomes of workers, etc. is a reasonably

straightforward matter. Occupational groups are generally easily recognizable and unambiguously defined. Not so the cultural industries.”<sup>8</sup>

Some studies, such as a recent Statistics Canada article, have used an industry-based definition of the cultural sector labour force.<sup>9</sup> Other studies have examined a slightly different set of cultural occupations than the 45 cultural occupation groups used in this report. The 45 occupations selected for this report were used in a previous study by Human Resources Development Canada and were developed in collaboration with the Research Section of the Canada Council for the Arts.<sup>10</sup> Estimates of the cultural labour force based on a different set of occupations will differ from the estimates in this report.

The number of people reporting earnings, also referred to as “earners”, was chosen as the count of cultural workers because this figure is readily available in the custom data set and because it provides a reasonable estimate of the

<sup>5</sup> We wish to thank the Canada Council for the Arts for sharing their custom data request with us, greatly facilitating the preparation of this report.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics not available in the custom data set, as of the time of writing of this report, included labour force breakdowns by sex, age and education.

<sup>7</sup> The word “culture” is notoriously difficult to define, and this report will not attempt to define the term beyond the working definition based on labour force classifications.

<sup>8</sup> David Throsby, “The cultural workforce: Issues of definition and measurement”, presented at the International Symposium on Culture Statistics, Montreal, October 2002, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> See Statistics Canada, *Focus on Culture*, vol. 14 no. 3.

<sup>10</sup> HRDC, *Industry Profile: Human Resource, Culture Occupation*, March 2001. Thanks go out to Claire McCaughey, Research Manager at the Canada Council for the Arts, for helping with the selection of the occupational codes.

number of people who actually worked in a cultural occupation. An earner is defined as a “person who earns a wage or has self-employment income”.<sup>11</sup>

Other counts of cultural workers based on the total population, the total labour force or the “experienced labour force” will vary from the figures presented in this report.<sup>12</sup>

## CENSUS STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The 2001 census is one of the best available sources of information on the cultural sector labour force. The census provides estimates based on a very large population base: census occupation data is estimated based on the 20% of households that complete a long census form.

However, the census is not a perfect source for cultural labour force information. Some aspects of the 2001 census affect the statistics on the cultural sector labour force.

The first issue is the timing of the census. The classification of occupations is

based mainly on the job that respondents spent the most hours at during the week of Sunday, May 6 to Saturday, May 12, 2001. This is an “in-between” period for many artistic and cultural endeavours. For example, many performing arts organizations have seasons that extend from the fall to the spring. These seasons may be finished before the week of May 6, leaving some cultural workers to find employment elsewhere during the late spring and summer months. Other cultural organizations and industries are tied more closely to cultural tourism. The prime season for most cultural tourist endeavours extends from late June to early September.

In addition, the focus on the job at which respondents worked the most hours may also affect the census results. Multiple job-holding is an important facet of the cultural labour force. Cultural employment may not be the one that workers are employed at for the most hours during a week. Given these issues, census estimates of the cultural sector labour force are likely to be somewhat low.

Another reason why estimates of the cultural sector labour force based on 2001 census data may be somewhat low is the fact that a number of occupations that are clearly cultural in nature are subsumed into larger occupation groups. It is not possible to accurately estimate the number of cultural workers in these broad occupation groups. Some examples of cultural occupations excluded from this report for this reason are:

- arts administrators, categorized in the broad occupation group “other administrative services managers”;

<sup>11</sup> See Statistics Canada’s 2001 Census Dictionary, available online at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/census2001/dict/index.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> The experienced labour force is defined as “persons who, during the week (Sunday to Saturday) prior to Census Day (May 15, 2001), were employed or unemployed who worked for pay or in self-employment since January 1, 2000”. See Statistics Canada’s 2001 Census Dictionary at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/census2001/dict/index.htm>

- arts teachers in primary, secondary or post-secondary schools. These occupations are categorized in general “teacher” or “professor” classifications related to their educational setting. However, arts teachers outside of educational institutions, such as dance teachers working in a private dance school, are included in the appropriate cultural occupation (such as “dancers”);
- senior arts managers. These occupations are usually categorized in broader occupation groups. For example, senior managers in publishing, film production and broadcasting are classified as “Senior Managers — Trade, Broadcasting and Other Services, not elsewhere classified”;
- managers of retail art galleries, who are classified as “Retail Trade Managers”;
- school librarians, who are classified as teachers; and
- public servants in the cultural sector, who are classified in general public service occupations.

In addition, media artists and new media artists are not well captured by the occupational classification. Media artists may be included with “Producers, directors, choreographers and related occupations” or with “Film and video camera operators”. The likely best-fit category for new media artists is website design, which is not included in the 45 occupations studied by this report. This points to a larger issue — the fact that the census does not distinguish between artistic and commercial endeavours.

Even though the 2001 census provides a very large sample size (20% of all households), this sample still has limits. Some breakdowns of the cultural sector labour force in lower population areas are less accurate because of the relatively small sample of cultural workers in small jurisdictions. In addition, attempts by Statistics Canada to ensure the confidentiality of individual responses result in some distortion of the estimates of cultural workers in lower population areas.<sup>13</sup> In some jurisdictions, some breakdowns of cultural workers are not presented in this report because they are not reliable estimates. In general, no estimates of 250 or less are presented in this report.

Finally, the census is conducted once every five years.

For these reasons, census data will not fill all analytical needs. Census data does, however, allow us to provide a very detailed portrait of Canada’s cultural sector labour force.

<sup>13</sup> This includes “random rounding” of small figures, whereby occupation groups with 1 to 10 individuals are rounded to 0 or 10 on a random basis. This results in some distortion of the estimates of cultural workers in the territories and other small population areas.

## APPENDIX TO THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS

<b>SUB-SECTOR</b>	<b>CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>ARTS?***</b>	<b>NUMBER REPORTING EARNINGS</b>	<b>AVERAGE EARNING</b>
Communications and publishing	Binding and finishing machine operators		10,090	\$23,129
Communications and publishing	Printing machine operators		15,120	\$27,336
Communications and publishing	Printing press operators		24,720	\$36,654
Communications and publishing	Professional occupations in public relations and communications		28,390	\$37,618
Communications and publishing	Supervisors, printing and related occupations		6,785	\$42,218
Communications and publishing	Typesetters and related occupations		5,910	\$26,043
Fine and commercial arts	Architects		12,990	\$52,592
Fine and commercial arts	Architectural technologists and technicians		6,290	\$34,960
Fine and commercial arts	Artisans and craftspersons	Yes	19,575	\$15,533
Fine and commercial arts	Camera, platemaking and other pre-press occupations		5,465	\$31,533
Fine and commercial arts	Graphic arts technicians		8,390	\$25,411
Fine and commercial arts	Graphic designers and illustrating artists		45,180	\$30,186
Fine and commercial arts	Industrial designers		9,955	\$40,469

## APPENDIX TO THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS

<b>SUB-SECTOR*</b>	<b>CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>ARTS?***</b>	<b>NUMBER REPORTING EARNINGS</b>	<b>AVERAGE EARNING</b>
Fine and commercial arts	Interior designers		11,645	\$29,808
Fine and commercial arts	Landscape architects		2,380	\$41,626
Fine and commercial arts	Painters, sculptors and other visual artists	Yes	15,250	\$18,666
Fine and commercial arts	Patternmakers, textile, leather and fur products		2,535	\$25,789
Fine and commercial arts	Photographers		11,955	\$25,407
Fine and commercial arts	Photographic and film processors		10,230	\$17,769
Heritage	Archivists		2,350	\$30,480
Heritage	Conservators and curators		2,410	\$34,041
Heritage	Librarians		12,135	\$35,564
Heritage	Library and archive technicians and assistants		15,610	\$23,935
Heritage	Library clerks		12,280	\$14,179
Heritage	Library, archive, museum and art gallery managers		4,285	\$44,186
Heritage	Technical occupations related to museums and galleries		5,135	\$16,535
Music and sound recording	Audio and video recording technicians		9,080	\$30,632

## APPENDIX TO THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS

<b>SUB-SECTOR*</b>	<b>CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>ARTS?***</b>	<b>NUMBER REPORTING EARNINGS</b>	<b>AVERAGE EARNING</b>
Music and sound recording	Conductors, composers and arrangers	Yes	2,290	\$27,381
Music and sound recording	Musicians and singers	Yes	31,000	\$16,090
Performing arts and audio-visual	Actors	Yes	10,765	\$21,597
Performing arts and audio-visual	Announcers and other broadcasters		8,915	\$30,505
Performing arts and audio-visual	Broadcast technicians		3,155	\$39,501
Performing arts and audio-visual	Dancers	Yes	6,865	\$14,587
Performing arts and audio-visual	Film and video camera operators		4,480	\$35,698
Performing arts and audio-visual	Managers in publishing, motion pictures, broadcasting and performing arts		12,020	\$51,216
Performing arts and audio-visual	Other performers	Yes	4,570	\$18,156
Performing arts and audio-visual	Other technical occupations in motion pictures, broadcasting and the performing arts		9,110	\$33,888
Performing arts and audio-visual	Producers, directors, choreographers and related occupations	Yes	19,240	\$43,111

## APPENDIX TO THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS

<b>SUB-SECTOR*</b>	<b>CULTURAL SECTOR OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>ARTS? **</b>	<b>NUMBER REPORTING EARNINGS</b>	<b>AVERAGE EARNING</b>
Performing arts and audio-visual	Support and assisting occupations in motion pictures, broadcasting and the performing arts		8,125	\$25,953
Performing arts and audio-visual	Theatre, fashion, exhibit and other creative designers		10,090	\$27,205
Writing	Correspondence, publication and related clerks		7,595	\$26,066
Writing	Editors		12,865	\$36,637
Writing	Journalists		13,380	\$37,473
Writing	Translators, terminologists and interpreters		14,215	\$31,500
Writing	Writers	Yes	21,145	\$31,911

\* Sub-sector divisions based on Human Resources Development Canada sector profile.

See *Industry Profile: Human Resource, Culture Occupation*, March 2001.

\*\* Part of arts labour force (9 occupations tracked by the Canada Council for the Arts)

See *Artists in the Labour Force: Arts Sector Profile #2*, July 1999.