

Arts in Health: Fact Sheet

CASE-MAKING STATS

84% of Canadians believe that art is essential to a healthy society.^[1]

72% of Canadians believe that arts and culture are important to mental well-being.^[2]

65% of physicians believe community social service integration improves care.^[3]

64% of Canadians believe that arts and culture play some or a large role in personal health.^[4]

The benefits of integrating arts into healthcare and public health is increasingly gaining recognition in Canada. From regulated healthcare facilities and therapeutic arts practices to community-based wellness programs, arts are being used in a variety of contexts to enhance Canadians' well-being. Emerging programs in arts-based health education highlight the role of arts in medical education and health research. Additionally, artists-in-residence programs at healthcare facilities and organizations support artists while providing arts-based care, further illustrating the expanding role of arts in health.

Beyond cultural enrichment, arts in health generate notable economic benefits. Investments in social prescribing, for example, yield significant returns by improving health outcomes and reducing strain on the healthcare system. As the field grows, demand for creative professionals in healthcare settings is rising, presenting new career opportunities for artists. Ultimately, integrating arts into health strategies strengthens civic life, fostering resilient and connected communities.

MORE FROM THE RESEARCH CATALOGUE



→ Improving Health Outcomes

A **Hill Strategies report** for the Canada Council for the Arts found that across 15 different arts, culture, and heritage activities, participants are more likely to report better health than non-participants.^[5]

→ Arts Interventions

In a review of evidence surrounding arts impact on health and well-being, the **World Health Organization** found that some arts interventions in health showed equivalent or greater cost-effectiveness to possible health interventions.^[6]

→ Social Prescribing

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found social prescribing tools like portable art carts offer a valuable way to cope and express emotions, even outside of hospital settings.^[7]

→ Participation Matters

A **CanadaHelps** poll (Ipsos) states that Canadians participating in arts and culture activities weekly (42%) or two to three times a month (46%) report having very good or excellent mental health.^[8]



Riz Herbosa de Guzman, 2016.

MAKE THE CASE

AWARENESS + ANALYSIS → ACTION
MakeTheCase.ca

Explore more Themes • Research Catalogue • Case Bank & Snapshots • About MTC



Leah Sandals, 2016.

FROM THE CASE BANK

Sharing Dance Older Adults **National Ballet of Canada**

Canada's National Ballet School's *Sharing Dance Older Adults* program offered accessible dance classes to enhance well-being. Developed with Baycrest, it included seated and standing options for all abilities. Available online and in communities, it required no experience and fostered joy, movement, and connection for older adults across Canada.^[9]

ArtSparks **FirstOntario Arts Centre Milton**

ArtSparks, by FirstOntario Arts Centre Milton, offers free performances to local children, enhancing their emotional well-being and cognitive development. By engaging students with storytelling and the arts, the program fosters empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills, positively impacting mental and emotional health while breaking down socioeconomic barriers.^[10]

ArtsCare **Mississauga Arts Council**

In 2023, The Mississauga Arts Council (MAC) proposed a two-year pilot *ArtsCare Social Prescription Program* to enhance mental health in Mississauga. This proposal built on the success of an earlier year-long pilot program. This initiative offers arts-based, non-pharmacological therapies to address mental health challenges, aiming to improve individual and community well-being.^[11]

ROM Social Prescription Program **Royal Ontario Museum**

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) launched a wellness program in January 2019, allowing healthcare and social service providers to "prescribe" museum visits as therapeutic services. Through the *ROM Social Prescription Program*, individuals receive passes for free general admission, promoting health and well-being.^[12]



Kevin Hogarth, 2016.

IN THE MEDIA

The Case for Social Prescribing **Maclean's**

This article discusses how doctors are increasingly prescribing social activities, such as art classes and nature walks, to improve patients' health.^[13]

The Mental Health Benefits Of Social Prescribing The Arts For Students **Forbes**

This article explores how social prescribing of arts activities, such as attending plays and creating sculptures, can improve students' mental health by reducing loneliness and fostering a sense of community.^[14]

ORGANIZATIONS

Arts Health BC

Arts Health BC is part of a national network promoting participation in the arts for improved health, healing, and well-being across British Columbia. It champions engagement in arts activities to enhance community health.

Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing (CISP)

The CISP is a national collaborative that connects people and practices to integrate social care with healthcare, addressing social determinants like loneliness and isolation.

**Explore more:
Arts in Health**

MAKE THE CASE

Make The Case demonstrates how arts and culture permeate all aspects of Canadian society and civic life, creating more opportunities to articulate the sector's value and increase investment.

Founding Project Partners

Business/Arts

**CULTURE
DAYS**



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada

SOURCES REFERENCED

1. Culture Days. (n.d.). Perceptions. Culture Days. <https://culturedays.ca/en/research/perceptions>
2. Culture Days. (2022). Creativity & well-being. Culture Days. <https://culturedays.ca/en/research/creativity-well-being>
3. Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing. (n.d.). Social Prescribing: Strengthening Canada's Health Care Landscape. https://irp.cdn-website.com/92bb31b3/files/uploaded/SP_and_Health_Care_Landscape.pdf
4. Culture Days. (n.d.). Perceptions. Culture Days. <https://culturedays.ca/en/research/perceptions>
5. Hill Strategies Research. (2013). The arts and individual well-being in Canada. Hill Strategies Research. <https://hillstrategies.com/resource/the-arts-and-individual-well-being-in-canada/>
6. World Health Organization. (2019). What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review>
7. Sandals, L. (2019). Building mental health through art. Culture Days. <https://culturedays.ca/en/blog/building-mental-health-through-art>
8. GlobeNewswire. (2024). Ipsos poll: Canadians who engage in arts and culture have better mental health, are less lonely, and better embrace cultural diversity. GlobeNewswire. <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2024/11/20/2984618/0/en/Ipsos-Poll-Canadians-Who-Engage-in-Arts-and-Culture-Have-Better-Mental-Health-are-Less-Lonely-and-Better-Embrace-Cultural-Diversity.html>
9. National Ballet School of Canada. (n.d.). Sharing dance for older adults. National Ballet School of Canada. <https://www.nbs-enb.ca/dance-for-life/sharing-dance-older-adults/>
10. FirstOntario Arts Centre Milton. (n.d.). School programs. FirstOntario Arts Centre Milton. <https://www.firstontarioartscentremilton.ca/en/arts-programs/school-programs.aspx>
11. ArtsCare. (n.d.). ArtsCare. ArtsCare. <https://www.artscare.ca>
12. Royal Ontario Museum. (2025). ROM launches new wellness program providing free visits to the. Royal Ontario Museum. <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/rom-launches-new-wellness-program-providing-free-visits-to-the>
13. Maclean's. (2025, March 31). The case for social prescribing. Maclean's. <https://macleans.ca/society/health/the-case-for-social-prescribing/>
14. Wood, E. (2025, March 10). The mental health benefits of social prescribing: The arts for students. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ericwood/2025/03/10/the-mental-health-benefits-of-social-prescribing-the-arts-for-students/>

This Fact Sheet was last updated March 31, 2025

**MAKE
THE
CASE**

AWARENESS + ANALYSIS → ACTION
MakeTheCase.ca

Explore more Themes • Research Catalogue • Case Bank & Snapshots • About MTC