Summary Note

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

Canadian Chamber of Commerce Business Data Lab and Business / Arts

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Artworks Report Summary Note
This is a document created to synthesize the points made in Artworks: The Economic and Social Dividends from Canada's Arts and Culture Sector, released in October 2025. The report was conducted by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Business Data Lab and commissioned by Business / Arts in partnership with Canada Council for the Arts. The report is featured on the Canada Council for the Arts website on their page, The Impact of the Arts. The report was created to assess the economic footprint of Canada's arts and culture sector, quantifying its contribution to the Canadian economy. These pages have been reviewed and reduced to their most compelling facts, filtered by the following categories: society, with a focus on social cohesion; economy and investment; geographic and province-specific data; and consumer trends to guide future action, along with the report's calls to action. Please refer to the original document for citation and quotation purposes.

Society

- 75% of Canadians believe that attending arts and culture events **positively impacts their sense of belonging** in Canada.
  - 12 percentage point increase from August 2024
- Previous releases have pointed to arts' ability to **help reduce stress and enhance well-being**
- The arts build **social cohesion**
- Arts communities **drive socio-economic outcomes** in cities
  - Talent attraction and retention
    - Cities that invest in culture attract and keep "creative-class" skilled workers (people in tech, science, design, media, and professional services), driving **innovation** and **growth**.

- Enhanced **social cohesion**
    - Cultural **participation builds belonging** and attachment. 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**.
- The strongest predictors of staying include emotional **connection** and a sense of **belonging**, both powerfully shaped by arts and cultural life
- Arts funding generally coincides with **higher well-being**
  - **Grant funding is critical** to enabling the arts and culture sector.
  - 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**
- Most culture domains are experiencing fast growth
- Participation is driven by **learning** and **experiences**
- 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**
- Realizing that **opportunity requires addressing structural challenges**
  - Public funding is slipping
- Strengthen its resilience and ensure continued **socio-economic benefits** for Canadians

Economy & Investment

- 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
- Will highlight the sector's social and economic impacts, consumer and export trends, and the return on investment from increased funding
- Arts and culture support **more jobs and GDP** than some of Canada's largest sectors
  - The arts and culture sector offers an economic premium compared to other key sectors of the Canadian economy, including manufacturing, oil and gas, and agriculture
  - On average, the arts and culture sector supports 13 jobs for every million in output
- 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
  - 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
- Arts and culture is a high economic impact sector
    - Arts and culture supports $131 billion of Canada's GDP and 1.1 million jobs across the country
    - Audio-visual and interactive media is the top contributor to the sector's impact, representing $36 billion in GDP and 291,000 jobs
        - 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
- By leveraging its **multicultural identity and creative industries**, Canada can strengthen people-to-people ties and **economic partnerships** in regions like Europe
- Arts and culture organizations have **limited resources**
    - Arts and culture non-profits have relatively lower revenue compared with other non-profits due to having a smaller organization footprint
    - The arts and culture 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
- Canada has a public and private giving gap
    - While many Canadians indicate through surveys they donate to charity, the average amount is lower than peer countries
    - **Filling this gap requires knowledge**
- Public and private investment need to work together
    - Culture-goers see funding for free admission as a **shared responsibility**
    - Federal investment in the arts **delivers exceptional returns**
- In 2024, the sector contributed $131 billion to Canada's GDP
- Arts and culture supports 1.1 million jobs in Canada
- An estimated $17 billion in federal and provincial tax revenue generated
- Evidence [through programs like artsvest by Business / Arts] suggests public capital leads to further capital through private sector matching

Geographic Data (Selected)
- Research suggests that culture is central to why people stay in a particular city   - Economic impact concentrated in three hubs: ON, QC, BC   - Ontario   - Strong visual and applied arts sector   - Ontario cultural tourists generate a disproportionate share of total tourism spending   - Culture visitors 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   - Quebec   - Punches above its weight in arts and culture   - British Columbia   - Highest GDP impact per $1 in output   - Prairies   - Represent 13% of Canada's arts sector   - Atlantic Canada   - Highest job growth potential   - Rural areas   - Arts and culture is more rural than the share of population   - 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   - Stable operating support, retention measures and rural delivery funding would materially **strengthen resilience and impact**

Trends to Guide Action
- People are drawn to participate in arts and culture for several key reasons: - Fostering **connections** with others   - Gaining **new perspectives**   - Building a **sense of belonging** within their communities   - Key trends from "culture-goers"   - Seeking novel experiences   - Cultural engagement remains strong

    - Content drives decision-making
    - Representation matters
- 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%
- **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

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