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Analysis in Brief

Workforce insights: Demographics in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector from 2015 to 2023

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Workforce insights: Demographics in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector from 2015 to 2023

by **Megan McMaster**

Businesses in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector are often influenced by external factors, such as changing economic conditions, household discretionary income, weather and seasonal variation. These factors directly affect employment levels, particularly during periods of financial uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper, the first of a three-study series, explores the demographic differences among employees in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector. This paper will focus on the performing arts, spectator sports and related industries, and the amusement and recreation industries. These industries are heavily influenced by tourism, consumer demand and discretionary spending on leisure. In recent years, inflationary pressures have affected these factors, impacting operational activities and employment in these industries.

This paper leverages administrative data to examine the distribution of this sector's workforce by gender,¹ age and full-time work status.² Results in this paper are based solely on employees who received a T4 slip by employers and on self-employed individuals, excluding other employment types, such as contract workers.

Performing arts industries

The performing arts industries include theatre companies, musical theatre and opera companies, dance companies, musical groups and artists, and other performing arts industries. These are further separated into non-profit businesses and for-profit businesses. Businesses in the non-profit performing arts are heavily subsidized, with 63.7% of total operating revenues in 2022 coming from grants, subsidies, donations, corporate sponsorships and fundraising (Statistics Canada, January 2024). The success of the performing arts industries depends on consumer participation and access to disposable income, both of which were affected by the pandemic.

Revenues for these industries declined in 2020 because of prolonged venue closures, prompting businesses to cut expenses to sustain operations. As restrictions eased, businesses began to reopen and resume activities, leading to some recovery in revenue, though the effects of the pandemic have lingered (Statistics Canada, January 2024).

The uncertainty of the pandemic led to significant job losses in the performing arts industries. Total employment reached its lowest point in 2021, when it fell to just 57.3% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels. The recovery in these industries has also been gradual, as the total number of employees in 2023 had returned to just 80.0% of pre-pandemic levels seen in 2019 (Statistics Canada, n.d.).

In the performing arts industries, there are notable differences in employment demographics. Two of these industries had nearly equal representation of male and female employees across all years included in this report. The three other industries had uneven gender splits. Dance companies and theatre (except musical) companies had a majority of female employees, while the musical groups and artists industry was predominately male. In 2023, based on business status, non-profit performing arts businesses had a slightly higher proportion of female employees (61.2%), whereas for-profit performing arts businesses had more male employees (55.6%).

1. The number of individuals identifying as non-binary has been steadily rising since 2019. However, the proportion of non-binary employees in 2023 remains too low to report.

2. Based on the definition of [full-time work status](#), the employees were classified as either full time or part time. With the average hourly wage by industry from the [Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours](#), a proxy value was established to represent a full-time salary. This approach is the same as that used in [Statistics Canada's AgZero modernization project](#), which studied agricultural employees.

Table 1
Proportion of men and women employed in the performing arts industries, 2015 to 2023

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	percent								
Non-profit performing arts									
Female	58.9	58.9	59.4	59.9	59.7	59.3	60.2	59.6	61.2
Male	41.1	41.1	40.6	40.1	40.2	40.7	39.7	40.3	38.7
For-profit performing arts									
Female	46.3	45.6	45.8	45.7	46.3	46.7	45.2	45.2	44.3
Male	53.7	54.4	54.2	54.3	53.7	53.3	54.8	54.8	55.6
Theatre (except musical) companies									
Female	57.7	57.9	59.1	58.3	59.1	59.3	59.9	60.3	60.5
Male	42.3	42.1	40.9	41.7	40.9	40.6	40.0	39.6	39.4
Musical theatre and opera companies									
Female	53.3	52.1	51.7	53.2	53.1	52.9	54.8	54.3	54.5
Male	46.7	47.9	48.3	46.7	46.8	47.1	45.2	45.7	45.3
Dance companies									
Female	79.3	78.1	77.7	79.0	78.5	77.4	77.9	76.7	78.5
Male	20.7	21.9	22.3	21.0	21.5	22.7	22.1	23.3	21.5
Musical groups and artists									
Female	38.7	38.8	38.9	38.7	39.3	39.3	38.6	39.4	39.3
Male	61.3	61.2	61.1	61.3	60.7	60.7	61.4	60.6	60.7
Other performing arts companies									
Female	48.4	48.5	49.7	48.8	48.9	51.1	48.2	46.4	47.8
Male	51.6	51.5	50.3	51.2	51.1	48.9	51.8	53.4	51.9

Note: Categories do not sum to 100%, as the non-binary category was removed because of size.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

In the performing arts industry, employees aged 25 to 34 made up the largest employment share, representing around one-quarter of total employees. In 2023, employees aged 25 to 54 made up 61.9% of the workforce. Furthermore, the performing arts industries enjoyed an age-diverse workforce in 2023, with 12.8% of employees aged 65 and older and 11.0% aged 24 and younger.

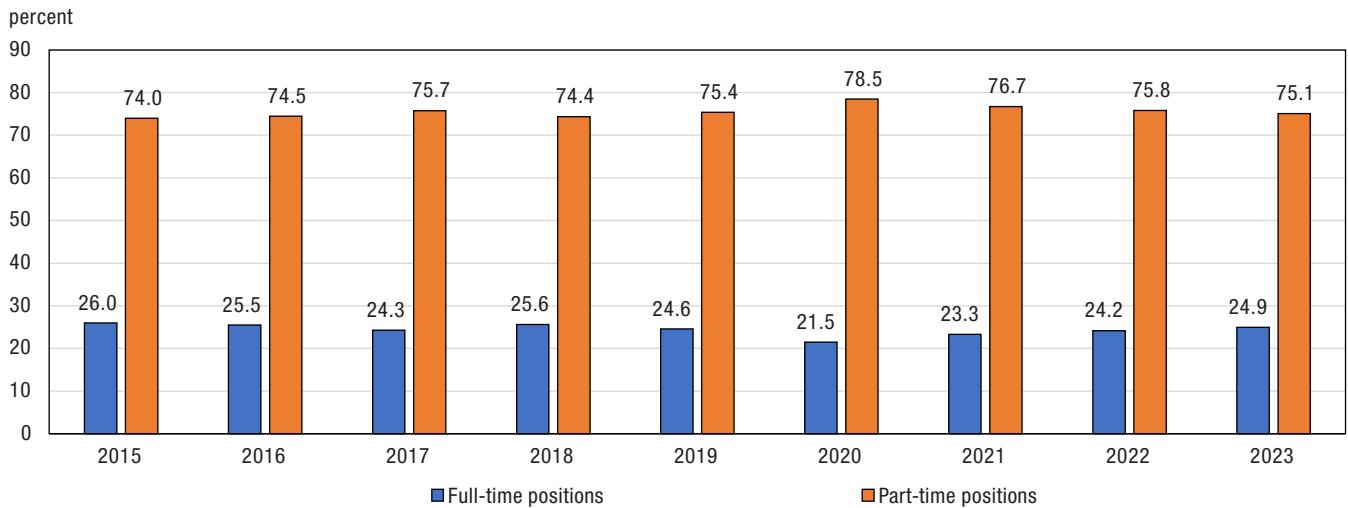
Table 2
Proportion of employees in the performing arts industries by age group, 2015 to 2023

Age	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	percent								
0 to 17	0.9	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8
18 to 24	11.4	11.2	11.0	10.7	10.5	8.6	9.1	10.0	10.2
25 to 34	25.4	25.2	25.5	25.4	25.6	25.4	24.6	24.8	25.1
35 to 44	20.2	20.7	20.9	21.5	21.6	22.5	22.1	21.9	21.0
45 to 54	17.4	16.8	16.2	15.8	15.5	15.8	16.1	16.0	15.8
55 to 64	16.4	16.3	16.2	15.9	15.3	15.5	15.1	14.5	14.3
65 to 74	6.6	6.9	7.5	7.9	8.4	9.4	9.9	9.6	10.1
75 to 84	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.5
85 to 94	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Given the seasonal nature of the performing arts industries, and the fluctuations in event schedules, these industries rely heavily on part-time employment, with part-time workers representing around 75% of the total workforce each year. Though the total number of employees fluctuated over the years, the proportion of part-time and full-time employees remained stable. In the performing arts industries, younger employees also generally worked fewer hours. In 2023, 14.7% of those employed in the performing arts industry who were aged 34 and younger were employed full time, compared with 39.6% of employees who were 35 and older.

Chart 1
Proportion of workers in full-time and part-time positions in the performing arts industry, 2015 to 2023



Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Spectator sports and related industries

After reaching record revenue levels in 2019, the spectator sports, event promoters, artists and related industries were devastated by the pandemic, with sports and other large events cancelled or rescheduled (Statistics Canada, February 2024). Yet, recovery for this industry was strong, with revenues in 2022 surpassing 2019 levels as events resumed and consumer demand soared.

The total number of employees in these industries followed a similar pattern to that of total operating revenue, with the highest number of employees seen in 2019, followed by a sharp decline of 38.6% in 2020 (Statistics Canada, n.d.). Beginning in 2022, as restrictions lifted and events resumed, the number of employees rebounded, reaching 98.7% of the 2019 levels by 2023.

Across the years studied, most employees in the spectator sports and related industries were working part time. Among these industries, the only one not to follow this trend was the agents and managers for artists, athletes, entertainers and other public figures industry, as the proportions of full-time and part-time employees were nearly equivalent. Throughout the pandemic, changing business needs led to shifting priorities for business owners in the spectator sports industry and in the promoters (presenters) of performing arts, sports and similar events industry, who proportionally reduced their number of part-time employees. However, as events resumed, the proportion of staff employed in these industries returned to normal levels.

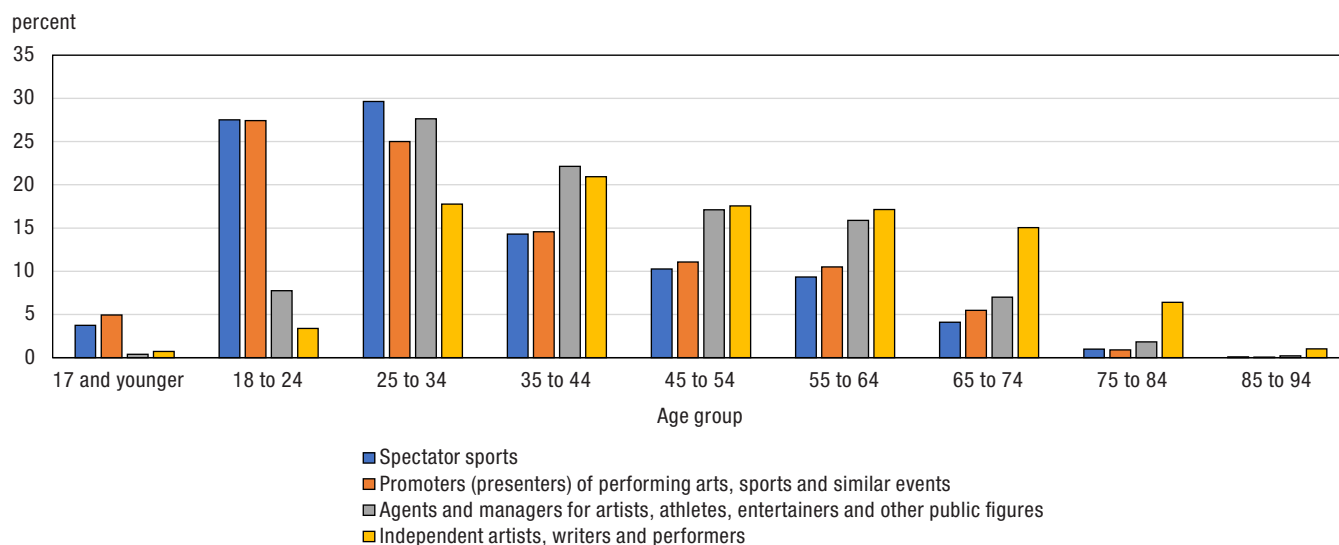
Table 3
Proportion of workers in full-time and part-time positions in the spectator sports and related industries, 2015 to 2023

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	percent								
Spectator sports									
Full-time positions	23.9	25.3	25.4	18.7	24.1	26.5	26.9	23.2	24.0
Part-time positions	76.1	74.7	74.6	81.3	75.9	73.5	73.1	76.8	76.0
Promoters (presenters) of performing arts, sports and similar events									
Full-time positions	15.8	13.7	13.9	13.2	17.4	23.5	21.1	18.6	14.2
Part-time positions	84.2	86.3	86.1	86.8	82.6	76.5	78.9	81.4	85.8
Agents and managers for artists, athletes, entertainers and other public figures									
Full-time positions	55.9	56.9	62.5	55.5	53.7	50.0	50.6	55.1	56.4
Part-time positions	44.1	43.1	37.5	44.5	46.3	50.0	49.4	44.9	43.6
Independent artists, writers and performers									
Full-time positions	35.7	37.8	40.2	39.3	40.9	37.0	46.2	44.5	43.5
Part-time positions	64.3	62.2	59.8	60.7	59.1	63.0	53.8	55.5	56.5

Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

The employment age distribution varies by industry. The spectator sports industry employs the youngest cohort of staff, with more than half of employees aged 34 and younger in each year of the study. A similar distribution can be seen in the promoters (presenters) of performing arts, sports and similar events industry, with just over half of employees in the same age cohort. The agents and managers for artists, athletes, entertainers and other public figures industry had a slightly older workforce, with about half of employees aged 25 to 44. Employees in the independent artists, writers and performers industry were spread out across the age groups. However, this industry employed the highest proportion of older employees, with 22.5% of its workforce being 65 and older in 2023.

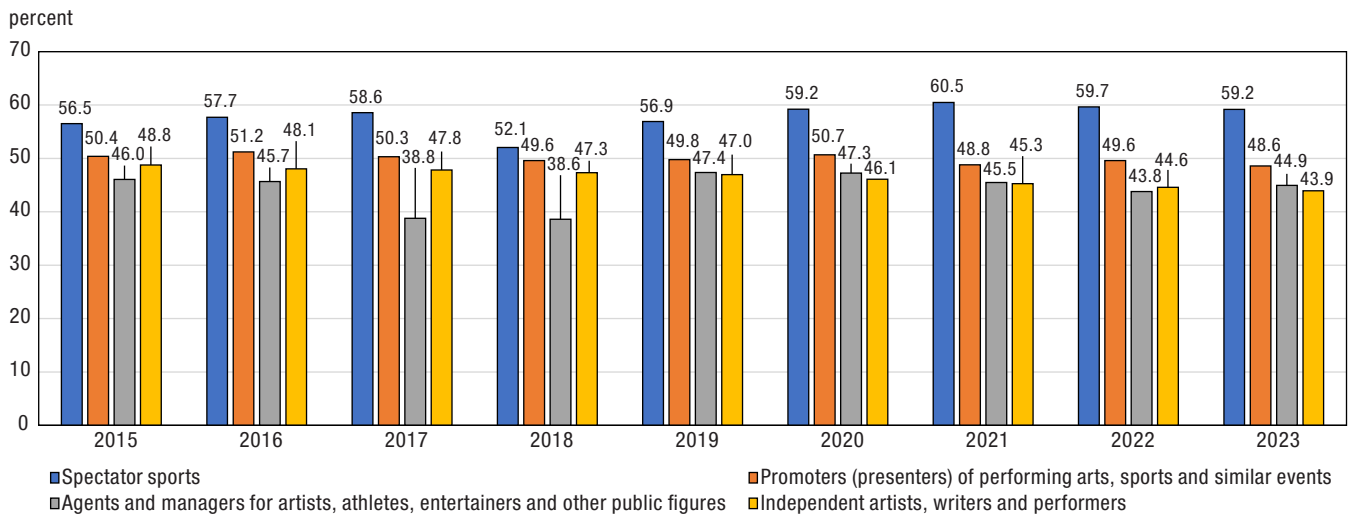
Chart 2
Proportion of employees in the spectator sports and related industries by age group, 2023



Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Across the spectator sports and related industries, the breakdown of employees by gender differs. The industry with the highest proportion of male employees was spectator sports, where across all years considered, close to 60% of employees were male. In contrast, the independent artists, writers and performers industry had slightly lower and stable representation of male employees, around 45% in each year of the study.

Chart 3
Proportion of men employed in the spectator sports and related industries, 2015 to 2023



Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Amusement and recreation industries

Similar to the other industries, the amusement and recreation industries were hit hard by the pandemic, with operating revenues falling sharply in 2020 as businesses had to close operations (Statistics Canada, November 2023). Recovery began in 2021 for some of these industries, though it varied based on the seasonality of operations and the feasibility of resuming business activities. Industries with summer seasons or the capacity to operate outdoors could begin their recovery in 2021, while for others, recovery was delayed until 2022.

The total number of employees in the amusement and recreation industries also saw a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the largest drop in 2020 and a slow rebound in the following years. In 2023, the total number of employees surpassed pre-pandemic levels from 2019, with employment up by 0.6% in the amusement parks and arcades industries and by 3.3% in the other amusement and recreation industries (Statistics Canada, n.d.).

Given the seasonality factors influencing these industries, part-time employees constituted a substantial portion of the workforce across all industries in 2023, with higher shares in the amusement parks and arcades industries (92.2%), the skiing facilities industry (91.9%), and the golf courses and country clubs industry (87.4%).

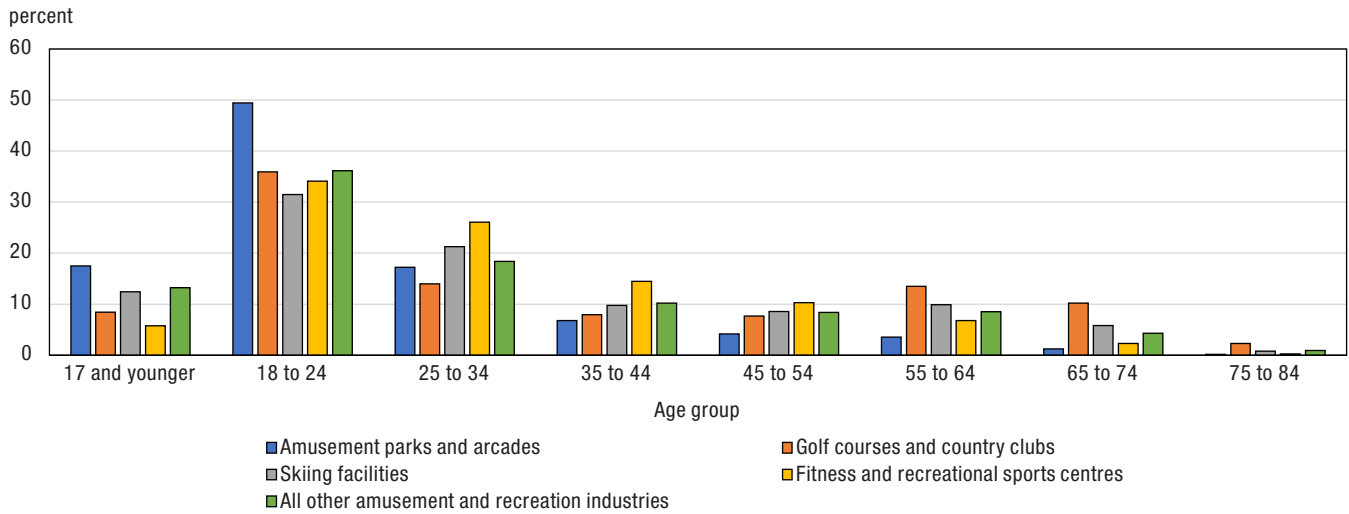
Table 4
Proportion of workers in full-time and part-time positions in the amusement and recreation industries, 2015 to 2023

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	percent								
Amusement parks and arcades									
Full-time positions	13.0	7.1	7.3	6.9	8.7	9.2	8.4	7.9	7.8
Part-time positions	87.0	92.9	92.7	93.1	91.3	90.8	91.6	92.1	92.2
Golf courses and country clubs									
Full-time positions	12.7	12.2	12.5	11.7	12.3	12.6	12.0	12.5	12.6
Part-time positions	87.3	87.8	87.5	88.3	87.7	87.4	88.0	87.5	87.4
Skiing facilities									
Full-time positions	7.6	8.1	7.2	6.9	7.2	6.3	7.7	7.8	8.1
Part-time positions	92.4	91.9	92.8	93.1	92.8	93.7	92.3	92.2	91.9
Fitness and recreational sports centres									
Full-time positions	15.1	15.1	16.0	14.3	16.1	13.5	14.0	15.7	16.6
Part-time positions	84.9	84.9	84.0	85.7	83.9	86.5	86.0	84.3	83.4
All other amusement and recreation industries									
Full-time positions	9.9	9.3	9.2	10.7	10.3	10.8	9.9	10.4	9.6
Part-time positions	90.1	90.7	90.8	89.3	89.7	89.2	90.1	89.6	90.4

Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

The amusement and recreation industries also employed a significant number of young people, with the largest share of employees in all industries being aged 18 to 24. The largest proportion of young employees was seen in the amusement parks and arcades industries, where almost half of all employees were 18 to 24 (49.4% in 2023). Furthermore, among employees in the amusements parks and arcades industries, 98.7% of those who were 24 and younger were employed part time, compared with 74.2% of those who were aged 25 and older.

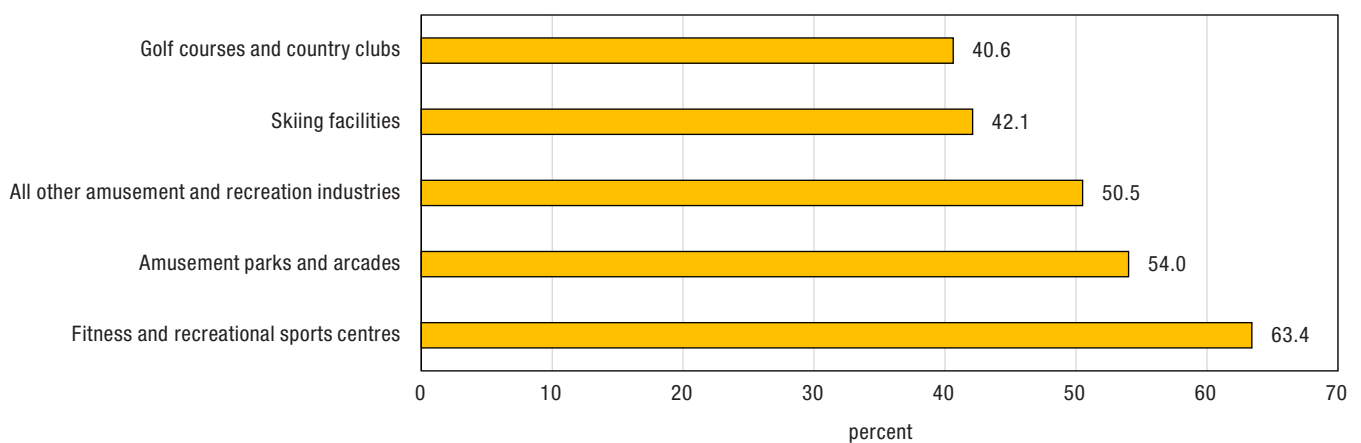
Chart 4
Proportion of employees in the amusement and recreation industries, by age group, 2023



Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

There are also noteworthy variations across the industries when looking at the distribution of employees by gender. The amusement parks and arcades industries and all other amusement and recreation industries had a balanced ratio of male and female employees. In contrast, the fitness and recreational sports centres industry employed a higher proportion of female employees during the period, with 63.4% of the workforce being female in 2023. Conversely, the golf courses and country clubs industry and the skiing facilities industry had a higher share of male employees each year studied, with 59.4% and 57.9% of workers being male in 2023, respectively.

Chart 5
Proportion of women employed in the amusement and recreation industries, 2023



Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Conclusion

Across the performing arts, spectator sports and related industries and the amusement and recreation industries, the total number of employees fluctuated from 2015 to 2023, but the employment demographics did not experience large variations. While these industries saw a decrease in total employment during the COVID-19 pandemic, most employment counts have since returned to normal or exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Like many other Canadian sectors, these industries will face challenges in the coming years, including shifting demographics, such as aging baby boomers, and a reduction in the availability of temporary foreign workers. As a result, competition to attract and retain talent will increase as these industries adapt to the changes and an evolving workforce, potentially leading to rising employment costs and changing demographics in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

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