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Educating artists

An analysis of the educational backgrounds of working artists and the labour market activities of arts program graduates in Canada

Executive Summary

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Educating artists has a two-pronged goal: 1) to examine the post-secondary educational qualifications of artists in Canada; and 2) to provide information about the occupations and workforce characteristics of graduates of post-secondary arts programs.

Data for the report are drawn from the National Household Survey (2011) and the National Graduates Survey (2009/10 graduates, surveyed in 2013).

Two recent American reports were influential in the framing of this report: *Artists Report Back: A National Study on the Lives of Art Graduates and Working Artists* and *Making It Work: The Education and Employment of Recent Arts Graduates*. An older Statistics Canada article (*Labour market outcomes of arts and culture graduates*) was also helpful in the development of this report.[1]

[1] *Artists Report Back: A National Study on the Lives of Art Graduates and Working Artists*, BFAMFAPHhD, 2014 (http://bfamfaphd.com/) and *Making It Work: The Education and Employment of Recent Arts Graduates*, by Jennifer C. Lena, Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2014 (http://snaap.indiana.edu/usingSNAAPData/valueForTheField/reports.cfm). *Labour market outcomes of arts and culture graduates*, Jacqueline Luffman, Focus on Culture, Vol. 12 No 3, Statistics Canada, 2001.

Artists: Diverse array of educational backgrounds

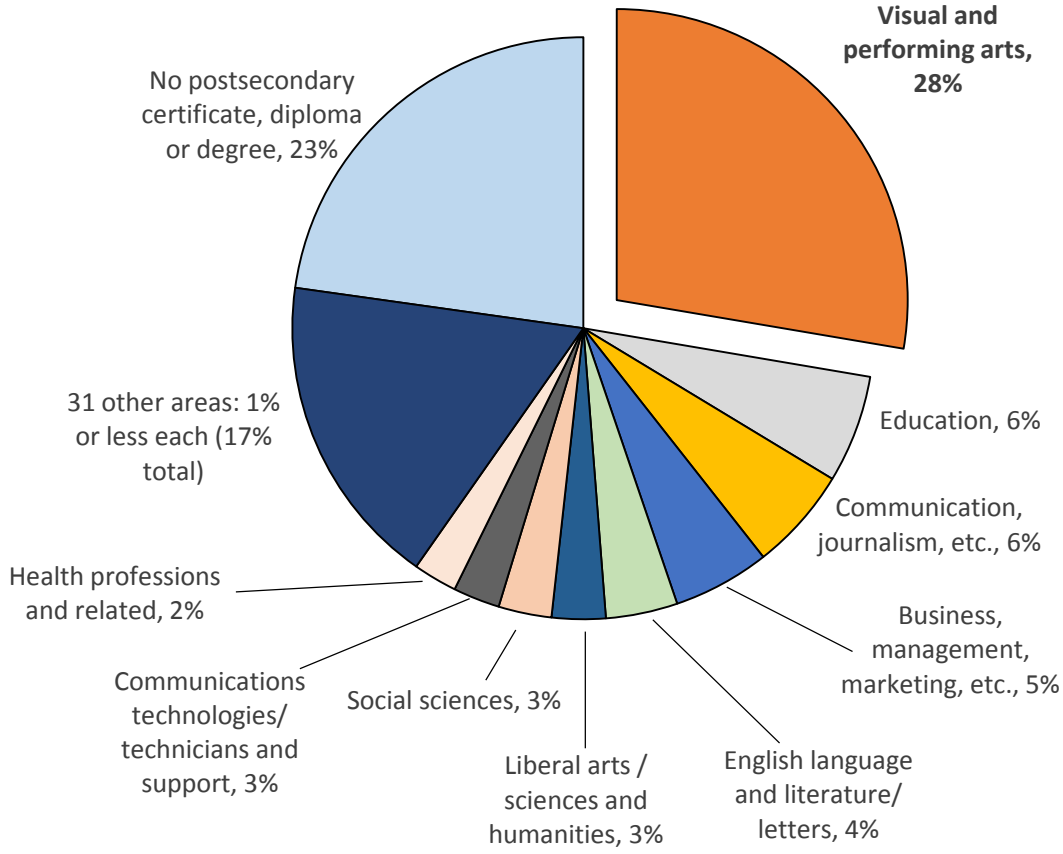
According to data from the 2011 National Household Survey, artists come from a diverse array of educational backgrounds. As shown in Figure ES1, over one-quarter of the 134,500 Canadian artists 25 or older (28%) graduated from a post-secondary visual or performing arts program.

Three other groups of post-secondary programs each account for 5% or 6% of artists:

- Education (6%)
- Communications and journalism (also 6%)
- Business, management, and marketing (5%)

Four percent of artists graduated from English language or literature programs.

Figure ES1: Post-secondary programs of artists 25 or older, 2011



Source: Statistics analyzed by Hill Strategies Research based on Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey.

11% of visual and performing arts graduates work as artists (NHS 2011)

There are 13.7 million Canadians 25 or older who have completed post-secondary studies, including nearly 400,000 who have completed a post-secondary visual and performing arts program (396,400, or 2.9% of all post-secondary graduates 25 or older).

Figure ES2 shows that, among the 326,300 visual and performing arts graduates who were in the labour force in May of 2011, 11% worked as artists. Another 20% worked in other occupations within the broad category of arts, culture, recreation, or sports.

Among the 326,300 visual and performing arts graduates who were in the labour force in May of 2011, 11% worked as artists.

Between 10% and 20% of visual and performing arts graduates worked in sales and service occupations (18%), business, finance, and administration occupations (14%), management occupations (11%), and occupations in education, law and social, community, or government services (also 11%). Two other occupation groups each accounted for 5% of visual and performing arts graduates: natural and applied sciences; and trades, transport, and equipment operators.

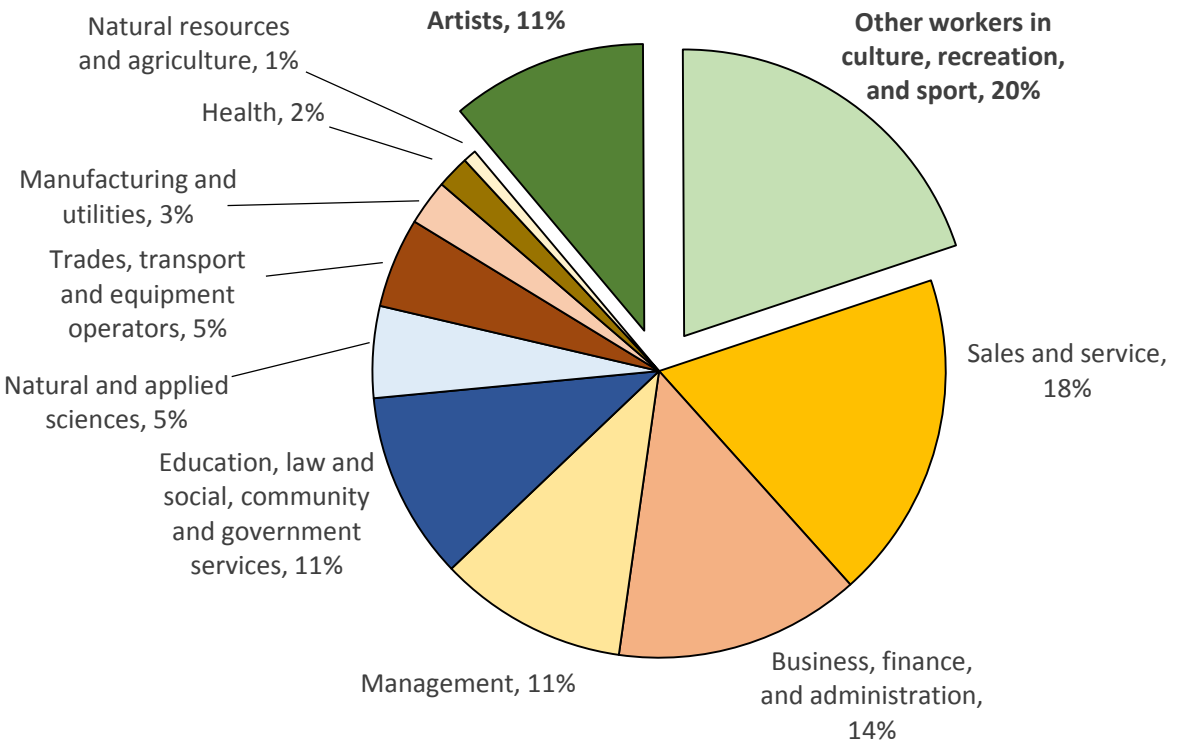
A note on artist statistics (NHS 2011)

The statistics on artists in this report refer to people who were classified in one of nine arts occupations, whether or not they were in the labour force during the reference week. This is a slightly larger group of artists than that captured in recent reports in the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series, which excluded 13,700 artists who were not in the labour force in May of 2011.

In order to focus on people who have had an opportunity to complete their post-secondary studies, this report examines data for people 25 years of age or older, which has the effect of excluding almost 16,000 artists 15 to 24 years of age (relative to previous reports in the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series).

The net effect of these two changes is that the overall number of artists in this report (134,500) is 2% smaller than the estimate in previous reports (136,600).

Figure ES2: Occupations of graduates of visual and performing arts programs (25 or older), 2011



Source: Statistics analyzed by Hill Strategies Research based on Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey.

Limited overlap between visual and performing arts graduates and working as an artist (NHS, 2011)

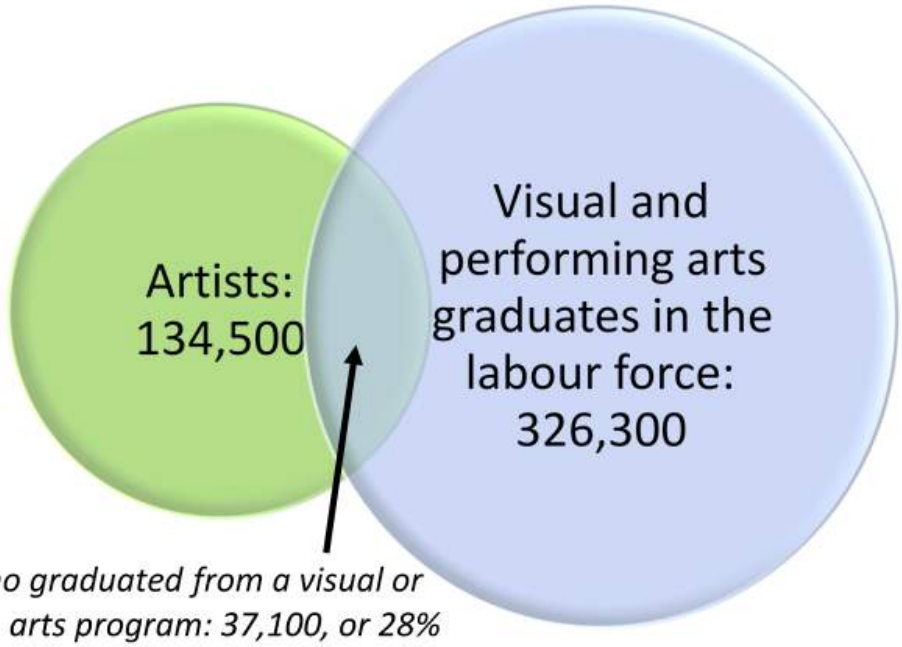
One of the key findings of a recent American report (*Artists Report Back: A National Study on the Lives of Art Graduates and Working Artists*) was a "surprising" lack of overlap between working artists and arts graduates. In that study, 16% of artists were art graduates, and 10% of arts graduates were found to be artists.

While the American study used different definitions of "artists" and "arts graduates", the findings from our Canadian research are relatively similar, especially regarding the occupations of arts graduates:

- 28% of the 134,500 Canadian artists 25 or older graduated from a post-secondary visual or performing arts program.
- 11% of the 326,300 visual and performing arts graduates who were in the labour force in May of 2011 worked as artists.

The overlap between visual and performing arts graduates and working artists is depicted in Figure ES3.

Figure ES3: Artists and visual performing arts graduates in the labour force, 2011



Source: Statistics analyzed by Hill Strategies Research based on Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey.

16,100 arts and communications graduates in 2009/10 (NGS)

Statistics Canada's National Graduates Survey provides detailed information about post-secondary graduates in 2009/10 using an aggregated combination of educational programs. In the National Graduates Survey, the closest grouping for "arts graduates" is those who graduated from a visual or performing arts program as well as those who graduated from a communications technology program at the post-secondary level. The inclusion of communications technology programs is not ideal for the analysis here. However, in the overall labour force in 2011, graduates of visual or performing arts programs represented 84% of workers in the aggregated grouping, while communications technologies accounted for only 16% of the aggregated grouping. This grouping of programs is labelled "arts and communications" in this report.

There are 16,100 Canadians who, in 2009/10, graduated from an arts or communications program. Arts and communications graduates were slightly more likely than other graduates to have pursued their studies in Quebec (28% of arts and communications graduates vs. 24% of all

graduates) and slightly less likely to have done so in the four Atlantic provinces (4% vs. 7%). In Ontario, the four western provinces, and the three territories, the percentage of arts and communications graduates was similar to the percentage of all graduates.

Sources of funding and student debt (NGS, 2009/10)

The most common sources of funding for arts and communications students who graduated in 2009/10 were parents (reported by 65% of graduates), employment savings (64%), and personal savings (59%). Two other funding sources were reported by about one-half of arts and communications graduates: government student loans (50%); and scholarships, awards, or prizes (45%).

For those graduates who had borrowed money from any source for their post-secondary education, the debt load of arts and communications graduates at the time of their graduation in 2009/10 was fairly similar to the debt load of other graduates:

- 17% of arts and communications graduates (compared with 21% of all graduates) had no debt load at graduation.
- A similar percentage of arts and communications graduates (11%) and all graduates (10%) had a debt load between $1 and $4,999.
- 15% of arts and communications graduates and 13% of all graduates had a debt load between $5,000 and $9,999.
- 32% of arts and communications graduates and 29% of all graduates had a debt load between $10,000 and $24,999.
- The same percentage of arts and communications graduates and all graduates (26%) had a student debt load (from all sources) of $25,000 or more.

Signs of underemployment of recent arts and communications graduates (NGS, 2009/10)

While the data in this report are not definitive, recent arts and communications graduates may be underemployed compared with other recent post-secondary graduates. In particular, arts and communications graduates are much less likely than all graduates to hold a job that is closely related to their studies (36% vs. 58%). Similarly, only 46% of arts and communications graduates indicated that the job they held at the time of the survey was the job that they had hoped to have after graduating, compared with 62% of all graduates.

Furthermore, arts and communications graduates are much more likely than other graduates to have held a low-paying position at the time of the survey: 23% of arts and communications graduates worked at a job with gross annual earnings below $20,000, compared with 10% of all graduates. Arts and communications graduates are much more likely than other graduates to be employed in sales and service occupations (22% vs. 13%).

Arts and communications graduates are also much more likely than other graduates to have had many employers in the three years since their graduation: 18% of arts and communications graduates (vs. 8% of all graduates) had four or more employers since their graduation.

Despite these labour market challenges, 72% of recent arts and communications graduates would choose the same program of studies again. This is only slightly less than the percentage of all graduates (76%).

Methodological notes

- Nine of Statistics Canada's detailed occupation codes (NHS, 2011) are included as artists in this report:
    - Actors and comedians
    - Artisans and craftspersons
    - Authors and writers
    - Conductors, composers, and arrangers
    - Dancers
    - Musicians and singers
    - Other performers
    - Producers, directors, choreographers, and related occupations
    - Visual artists
- Individuals are classified in the occupation in which they worked the most hours during a specific reference week. If they did not work during the reference week, they are classified based on the job at which they worked the longest since January 1, 2010.
- Artists who spent more time at another occupation than at their artwork during the reference week would be categorized in the other occupation.
- Artists who teach in post-secondary, secondary, or elementary schools are classified as teachers or professors and are therefore excluded from the count of artists. Instructors and teachers in some settings (such as private arts schools, academies, and conservatories) are included in the arts occupations.
- Individuals who are employed or self-employed are captured in each occupation.