

Record level of individual donations to cultural organizations in 2004

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Over the last few years, many cultural organizations have been raising funds to build new spaces, renew older buildings, develop endowment funds or cover operating expenses. A number of these projects have achieved a fairly high public profile.

A new report from Hill Strategies Research, entitled *Individual Donors to Arts and Culture Organizations in Canada in 2004*, provides a picture of arts and culture fundraising in 2004. The report shows that 732,000 Canadians 15 years of age or older made financial donations worth a total of \$188 million to arts and culture organizations in 2004. This represents a record level of donations by individuals to arts and culture organizations – much higher than amounts captured in surveys conducted in 2000 and 1997.

Because of slightly different survey content and methodology, previous estimates of donations to all types of non-profit organizations may have been underestimated. This could lead to an exaggeration of the increase in donations between 2000 and 2004. However, the increase in the donations to arts and culture organizations was much higher than any other non-profit sector that was defined consistently in 2000 and 2004. It is highly unlikely that this disproportionate increase could be the result of survey changes alone, which did not favour arts and culture organizations over other types of non-profit organizations. Overall, it is clear that there was a substantial, real increase in donations to arts and culture organizations between 2000 and 2004.

The report examines data from custom tabulations that Hill Strategies Research commissioned from Statistics Canada based on the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). This national survey questioned a very large and statistically representative sample of Canadians 15 or older (20,832 people) about their financial gifts to all types of not-for-profit organizations in the 12 months preceding the survey.

A clear challenge for arts and culture organizations is to sustain the fundraising momentum that they have built through time-limited or project-specific campaigns. It will be interesting to examine the level of individual donations to arts and culture organizations in the next survey on this topic, scheduled for 2007.

Arts and culture donations in Quebec

In Quebec, there were about 95,000 donors to arts and culture organizations in 2004. This represents 1.5% of the Quebec population, the lowest such percentage of all the regions of Canada. The 95,000 donors contributed about \$27 million to arts and culture organizations in 2004.

High average donation levels in Canada

The \$188 million donated to arts and culture organizations represents, on average, a donation of \$257 per arts and culture donor. This average annual donation ranks arts and culture organizations very highly compared with other non-profit organizations. Religious organizations rank far above all other non-profit organizations, with an average annual donation of \$395 per donor. Arts and culture organizations are essentially tied with universities and colleges for the second highest average donation (\$258 for universities and colleges vs. \$257 for the arts and culture).

The relatively high average donation to arts and culture organizations implies that those Canadians who are committed to the arts and culture dig deep to provide a high level of support.

Strong competition for donors

There is certainly strong competition for donors from other non-profit sectors. With \$188 million in donations in Canada – 2.1% of total donations to all types of non-profit organizations – the arts and culture rank eighth out of 11 types of non-profit organizations. Religious organizations receive nearly half of all donations (\$4.0 billion), followed by health organizations (\$1.2 billion) and social service organizations (\$903 million). Arts and culture organizations receive less than sports and recreation organizations (\$212 million) but more than universities and colleges (\$129 million).

Donor development work in the arts and culture can have many obstacles. Although many Canadians recognize the value of arts and culture in our communities, public awareness and support of fundraising needs are certainly lower for arts and culture organizations than for other types of organizations, such as those focused on health care or children. In addition, some arts and culture attendees and participants may not realize that a large portion of the revenues of arts and culture organizations is not covered by admission fees, other earned revenues or government funding. This may help explain why the 732,000 donors to arts and culture organizations comprise only 3.3% of all Canadian donors.

Full report also available

The full report, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ontario Arts Council, is available free of charge on the Hill Strategies Research website (<http://www.hillstrategies.com>) and the websites of the funding organizations. The report is the 15th in the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series from Hill Strategies Research.

Media interviews

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