

New report reveals highly artistic neighbourhoods in Canada's largest cities

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Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Large Cities, a new study prepared by Hill Strategies Research for the City of Vancouver, the City of Calgary, the City of Toronto, the City of Ottawa and the Ville de Montréal, shows that, collectively, the 53,500 artists in these five large cities represent 38% of all artists in Canada, a proportion that is much higher than the five cities' share of the overall Canadian labour force (21%). The five cities collectively have 209,500 cultural workers, representing 34% of all cultural workers in Canada.

The report provides an analysis of artists residing in various postal regions – “neighbourhoods” – in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver in 2006. The report is the fruit of and funded by a ground-breaking collaboration between cultural staff at the five large cities. The collaboration was made possible because of the work of the Creative City Network of Canada.

This document summarizes some key findings from the report, including the top-ranked neighbourhoods in each city and across the country, as well as changes in highly artistic neighbourhoods (such as Montreal's Plateau and downtown Toronto) between 2001 and 2006. Note: The concentration of artists (or cultural workers) is calculated as the percentage of the overall labour force that reported an arts (or cultural) occupation in 2006.

Neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in each of the five cities

The report provides lists of the ten neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in each city. Nearly 22,000 artists live in the 50 neighbourhoods in the five cities' top ten lists. This represents 41% of the artists in the five cities and 16% of all artists in Canada.

This means that cultural development in cities is partly an issue of neighbourhood development. With 41% of all artists in the five cities residing in the most artistic neighbourhoods, strategies to encourage the arts should include the development and maintenance of neighbourhoods that are accessible and desirable for artists.

In all five cities, most of the areas with the highest concentration of artists are fairly centrally located. This confirms the belief that artists tend to prefer older, “authentic” urban

neighbourhoods. However, there are also some areas with high concentrations of artists further from the cities' downtown cores.

Neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in Canada

Each of the five cities has areas with above-average concentrations of artists. However, it is in certain Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver neighbourhoods where the concentration of artists is the highest. In fact, all ten of the neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in Canada are in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver:

1. Montreal's H2T neighbourhood has 7.8% of the local labour force in the arts. H2T extends northward from avenue du Mont-Royal to avenue Van Horne (and the railway tracks) between St-Denis and Jeanne-Mance. This is the "most artistic neighbourhood" in Canada, with an artistic concentration that is nearly ten times the Canadian average (0.8%).
2. Montreal's H2W neighbourhood, directly south of H2T (south of avenue du Mont-Royal to avenue des Pins between St-Denis and avenue du Parc), has 565 artists out of a total labour force of 7,510, for an artistic concentration of 7.5%.
- T3. Toronto's M6R neighbourhood (Parkdale west to Parkside Drive) has 6.0% of its labour force in arts occupations. This concentration is about seven times the national average.
- T3. Montreal's H2Y neighbourhood (the Old Montreal and Old Port areas) also has an artistic concentration of 6.0%.
5. Toronto's M6J neighbourhood (West Queen West, centered on Trinity-Bellwoods Park) has 5.5% of its labour force in arts occupations.
- T6. Toronto's M6G neighbourhood (north of M6J, extending from College Avenue to St. Clair between Bathurst and Ossington) has 5.3% of the local labour force in arts occupations.
- T6. Montreal's H2J neighbourhood, which extends east of H2T (from St-Denis to Papineau between the railway tracks and Rachel) has an artistic concentration of 5.3%.
- T8. Montreal's H2V neighbourhood (Outremont) has 5.2% of its labour force in the nine arts occupations.
- T8. Toronto's M5R neighbourhood (the Annex and Yorkville areas) has 835 artists out of 15,910 total workers, for an artistic concentration of 5.2%.
10. Vancouver's V5L neighbourhood (centered on Commercial Drive and extending from Burrard Inlet to East 1st Avenue between Clark Drive and Nanaimo Street) has 5.1% of the local labour force in arts occupations.

Changes in highly artistic neighbourhoods between 2001 and 2006

Between 2001 and 2006, the concentration of artists in all five cities remained relatively stable. Of the 242 neighbourhoods with reliable data in both 2001 and 2006, 40% (97 neighbourhoods) showed an increase in the concentration of artists. Another 15% (37 neighbourhoods) showed no change in the concentration of artists, while 45% (108 neighbourhoods) saw a decrease in the concentration of artists between 2001 and 2006.

Of the 50 neighbourhoods included in the five cities' top ten lists in 2001, 36 (or 72%) remained in the top ten in 2006. This means that just over one-quarter of the neighbourhoods (28%) fell out of the top ten during the five-year timeframe.

The report shows that, in Montreal, two of the four highly artistic neighbourhoods on the Plateau in 2001 experienced decreases in their concentration of artists by 2006. Areas further north, but still centrally located, saw significant increases in their concentration of artists.

In Toronto, many areas close to Yonge Street, the "dividing line" between east and west in the city, saw substantial decreases in their concentration of artists. Areas further west and east experienced important increases.

In Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa, the neighbourhoods with increases and those with decreases are located in various parts of the cities.

Vancouver: Highest city-wide concentration of artists

All five cities have a concentration of artists that is greater than or equal to the Canadian average (0.8%). Among the five cities, Vancouver has the highest concentration of artists (2.3% of its overall labour force in the nine arts occupations), compared with 1.6% in Toronto, 1.5% in Montreal, 0.9% in Ottawa and 0.8% in Calgary.

Vancouver has the highest city-wide concentration of the five cities in this study, largely due to the fairly wide geographic spread of artists in the city. Vancouver has only one neighbourhood among the top 10 in all five cities. However, at the other end of the spectrum, Vancouver has only 11 neighbourhoods with a concentration of artists below 2%, compared with 59 in Toronto, 57 in Montreal, 26 in Calgary and 25 in Ottawa.

Concentration of cultural workers in each city

All five cities have a concentration of cultural workers that is greater than the Canadian average (3.3%). Vancouver has the highest concentration of cultural workers (7.2% of its overall labour force in 48 cultural occupations), compared with 6.4% in Montreal, 5.9% in Toronto, 4.7% in Ottawa and 3.6% in Calgary.

The analysis of cultural workers by neighbourhood confirms the belief that artists and cultural workers tend to reside in the same neighbourhoods. There are 25,100 cultural workers in Vancouver, representing 7.2% of all Vancouver workers. Eight of the ten Vancouver neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of cultural workers (between 9.1% and 11.9%) are also among the ten neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in Vancouver.

In Montreal, there are 56,100 cultural workers, representing 6.4% of all Montreal workers. The ten Montreal neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of cultural workers (between 12.7% and 18.8%) are the same ten neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in Montreal, albeit in a different order.

Toronto has 82,600 cultural workers, which accounts for 5.9% of all Toronto workers. Of the ten Toronto neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of cultural workers (between 11.7% and 16.3%), nine are also among the ten neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in Toronto.

Ottawa has 22,500 cultural workers, representing 4.7% of all Ottawa workers. The top eight neighbourhoods are also among the ten neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in Ottawa. In the 11 Ottawa neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of cultural workers, the concentration is between 4.9% and 9.4%.

Calgary has 23,300 cultural workers, representing 3.6% of all Calgary workers. The top eight neighbourhoods are also the eight neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of artists in Calgary, albeit in a different order. In the 11 Calgary neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of cultural workers, the concentration is between 3.9% and 7.5%.

Why is it important to track artistic neighbourhoods?

There is a large body of research that shows that the arts can contribute to the quality of life as well as the social and economic vitality of cities. On an individual level, the arts can stimulate, inspire and entertain. At the neighbourhood level, strong artistic environments may contribute to changes in local economies, social environments, neighbourhood character and demographics. In short, a strong artistic community anchored in strong local neighbourhoods can enhance the whole community's well-being.

For these reasons, it is important to identify and track creative neighbourhoods – areas that are attractive to artists for a number of reasons: inexpensive housing, access to employment and self-employment opportunities, access to resources (such as studio space, galleries, rehearsal and performance space, artist-run centres and associations), social networks, physical environment, family reasons and more.

On the other hand, gentrification may also occur as a result of neighbourhoods being considered “artsy” or “trendy”. This is another important reason to track creative neighbourhoods: to identify where gentrification and displacement of artists may be occurring.

Methodological notes

Artists include actors, choreographers, craftspeople, composers, conductors, dancers, directors, musicians, producers, singers, visual artists and writers. Cultural workers include creative, production, technical and management occupations in the areas of broadcasting, film and video, sound recording, performing arts, publishing, printing, libraries, archives, heritage, architecture and design. Individuals are classified in the occupation in which they worked the most hours between May 7 and 13, 2006 (the census reference week).

The study is based on a custom data request from Statistics Canada’s 2006 census, commissioned by Hill Strategies Research. The report includes statistics concerning the number of artists, their earnings, education levels, sex and changes between 2001 and 2006. The report also includes a brief analysis of cultural workers by neighbourhood in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver in 2006.

For more information

The full report, funded by the City of Vancouver, the City of Calgary, the City of Toronto, the City of Ottawa and the Ville de Montréal, is available free of charge on the Hill Strategies Research website (<http://www.hillstrategies.com>) and the cities’ own websites.

Media contact

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