

Impacts and Challenges of Cultural Venues in New Brunswick



The culmination of over a year of research and discussion

This is the final report of a major research project into the impacts and post-pandemic challenges of the arts, culture, and heritage of New Brunswick, a project that started in early 2023.

Research activities included:

- A statistical profile of the 2,700 professional artists in New Brunswick in 2021.
- A summary of a survey of 71 cultural venues.
- A summary of 13 interviews with senior staff members of cultural venues.
- An analysis of other data on the arts and culture of the province.

The project is intended to produce results that will inform the province's arts, culture, and heritage sector for the next decade. The project's partners will use these resources to further their information sharing, policy, and advocacy activities for the betterment of the sector as a whole.

The project partners are ArtsLink NB, Association acadienne des artistes professionnels du Nouveau-Brunswick (AAAPNB), and the Owens Art Gallery at Mount Allison University. The project's Steering Committee includes Julie Whitenect of ArtsLink NB, Anne-Cécile Grunenwald of AAAPNB, and Emily Falvey of the Owens Art Gallery. Laurence Dubuc (AAAPNB) and Emma Hassencahl-Perley (visual artist, curator, and educator) also contributed to the earlier stages of this project.



The project was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Government of Canada, and the Government of New Brunswick.



Kelly Hill, President of Hill Strategies Research, conducted the research and wrote this report.





Key findings

This report includes an analysis of many items of importance for arts, culture, and heritage venues in New Brunswick, including financial health, human resources, community engagement, Truth and Reconciliation, attendance, physical condition, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Here are some of the noteworthy findings from the research:

- 1** Funding is an area of significant concern. In fact, finances are a constant, troubling challenge for most venues.
- 2** Cultural venues typically have small staff contingents and rely heavily on volunteers.
- 3** Cultural workers face many significant challenges, including the need for multiple jobs, unpaid work in their cultural job, mental health challenges, and relatively low incomes.
- 4** By and large, cultural venues believe that their community engagement is an area of strength.
- 5** Venues have important impacts in communities across the province, including a major role in enhancing the arts, heritage, and creativity in their communities.
- 6** The province's cultural venues are trying to be spaces of reflection, conversation, and lasting impact on people's lives. Venues are striving to better understand their communities and deepen their connections.
- 7** With much focus on Truth and Reconciliation, there have been increasing levels of connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. Still, non-Indigenous organizations are at various stages in their journeys to connect with Indigenous Peoples and organizations.
- 8** Venues have a central role in promoting and supporting the province's artists. However, the 2,700 professional artists in New Brunswick tend to have very low incomes, especially relative to artists' typical education levels (often a bachelor's degree or higher).
- 9** Roughly one-quarter of respondents believe that their venues are not in good physical condition. Particularly large proportions of venues are not in good shape regarding equipment, HVAC, and physical accessibility.
- 10** Facing many equity-related challenges and opportunities, the province's venues are working to increase diversity and improve accessibility. National statistics from the 2021 census indicate that, among artists, cisgender men have the highest median incomes (\$54,400), followed by cisgender women (\$45,600, or 16% less than cisgender men), transgender people (\$36,400, or 33% less than cisgender men), and gender diverse people (\$31,400, or 42% less than cisgender men).
- 11** The importance of rural cultural activity in New Brunswick is highlighted in the report. For example, N.B. is one of two provinces where rural and small-town artists represent over one-half of all artists. The 1,500 rural and small-town artists represent 55% of the province's artists. Another example: exactly one-half of government-owned cultural facilities are located in rural areas of the province.



Methods

Statistical profile of artists and cultural workers

Using custom data that Hill Strategies requested from Statistics Canada's 2021 long-form census, [the statistical profile](#) examines the demographics, employment characteristics, and incomes of artists in New Brunswick, as well as summary information about workers in all occupations in arts, culture, and heritage (a category that includes artists).

The analysis relates to professional workers, but with a very specific concept of professional. The census data on occupations include people who worked more hours as an artist than at any other occupation between May 1 and 8, 2021, plus people who were not in the labour force at that time but had worked more as an artist than at another occupation between January of 2020 and May of 2021. Part-time artists who spent more time at another occupation in May of 2021 would be classified in the other occupation. (The same would be true of workers in all cultural occupations.)

Survey of cultural venues

In June and July of 2023, a groundbreaking survey was conducted to better understand cultural venues' contributions to the cultural community and all New Brunswickers, as well as their financial health and human resources.

The survey received 71 responses that were complete enough to retain for analysis, including 38 in English (54% of the total) and 33 in French (46%). Because the survey was not based on a random sample, it is not possible to estimate a margin of error.

A wide variety of venues responded to the survey. Responses were received from:

- Arts, culture, and heritage organizations of many sizes, types, and locations within New Brunswick, plus a few individuals with a venue. The most common types of venues responding to the survey were art galleries, performance spaces, community centres, studio spaces, museums, and educational spaces.
- Venues in 29 different communities across the province.

Hill Strategies and the project partners wish to thank the respondents for taking the time and effort to complete the survey.

The [“satellite report” on the survey](#) provides a summary of the responses. Beyond organization names (which are listed in the satellite report), the survey responses are being kept confidential.

Interviews with operators of cultural venues

In-person, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 13 senior artistic and administrative staff members of cultural venues in June and November of 2023.

The interviews, each of which lasted under an hour, touched on the following themes:

- Engagement with local residents and all New Brunswickers
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Financial health
- Human resources
- Contributions to New Brunswick's arts, culture, and heritage community
- Other areas of importance in the current environment

Kelly Hill thanks the interviewees for their time and insights. The full list of interviewees is available in [the satellite report on the interviews](#), as are many more details about the interview findings.

Other research efforts

Existing data on arts, culture, and heritage venues were also investigated as part of this project. For example, New Brunswick-specific data were also gathered from Hill Strategies' [Statistical insights on the arts](#) service. In addition, the New Brunswick Public Library Service kindly shared their data on library usage for this report.

What do we mean by “cultural venues”?

In this report, the term cultural venues refers to any organization in the arts, culture, and heritage that owns or operates a space through which it interacts with the public or other organizations.

For example, the following types of arts, culture, and heritage venues responded to the survey:

- Art gallery / art museum
- Performance / presentation space
- Community centre or other multidisciplinary hub
- Studio space
- Museum (other than an art museum)
- Educational space (e.g., arts schools, primary or secondary schools)
- Archives
- Artist-run centre
- Library
- Heritage / history site (e.g., zoo or aquarium animals, marine information, botanical garden)
- Cultural venue associated with an educational institution (e.g., campus radio)
- Media arts centre
- Publisher
- Bookstore

Remainder of the report

The rest of the report is organized based on key themes from the research:

- 1** Finances of cultural venues
- 2** Human resources
- 3** Community engagement activities of cultural venues
- 4** Venues' perspectives on Truth and Reconciliation
- 5** Professional artists in New Brunswick
- 6** Attendance and marketing of cultural venues
- 7** Physical condition of cultural venues
- 8** Perspectives on equity, diversity, and inclusion in cultural venues

Throughout the report, the project partners (ArtsLink NB, AAAPNB, and the Owens Art Gallery) have indicated what actions need to be taken to address challenges highlighted by the research.



Finances

The survey of and interviews with cultural venue representatives indicated that funding is an area of significant concern, both in terms of government funding and earned revenues.

In the survey, “obtaining adequate government funding” was identified as a concern by 59% of respondents and a strength by just 18%, with 23% saying “somewhere in between (or both)”. This is one of the highest levels of concern among all response options in the question (second only to concern over the busy lives of attendees and the resulting competition for their time).

“Obtaining donations and/or sponsorships (from individuals and businesses)” was identified as a concern by 54% of respondents and a strength by 21%, with 25% saying “somewhere in between (or both)”.

Regarding the future development of responding venues, government funding was deemed to be most important (selected by 62%), followed by generating earned revenues (52%). (After these two issues, there was a big drop-off. The third most common selection was overall staff capacity, which was selected by 34% of responding venues.)

A constant, troubling challenge

Financial health was the most-discussed topic during the interviews, which revealed finances to be a constant, troubling challenge for most venues. Some stated that culture in New Brunswick is severely under-funded. Operating funding is an urgent need, as many rely on project funding to make ends meet, which hinders long-term stability.

Operating funding was specifically mentioned by many organizations. For example:

- **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre** summarized its biggest need in two words: “core funding”. The Centre relies almost exclusively on project funding to make up its budget of \$350,000 to \$400,000.
- Andrew Keirstead (Executive Director of the **Saint John Arts Centre**) noted that the Centre relies heavily on “a patchwork” of project funding and that adequate and sustainable operating funding is sorely needed.

- For the **Centre culturel Aberdeen**, securing their operating budget is challenge #1. The Centre has seen a precipitous increase in costs, and government funding is very difficult to obtain, especially now that pandemic-related funding is no longer available. René Légère (Executive Director) worries that some organizations will have to close, given the “crisis” that he sees in the arts community.

Funding mix

Similar to the challenges in obtaining operating funding, some venues noted during the interviews that they are finding it difficult to raise money for ongoing programming, rather than new activities. When project funding is available, many funders want to contribute to something new, or at least an expansion of activities, which unfortunately ignores issues of long-term stability.

- An example from the visual arts was provided by the **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen**, which indicated that it is difficult to find money for the core work of art collection and protection.
- A performing arts example was offered by the **Imperial Theatre**, which is finding it harder to obtain funding for curriculum relevant, socially relevant shows for school children. This is, in part, because these activities are not new for the organization, and sustainable funding has never been available.

A few venues interviewed for this project believe that their financial situation is OK: they have kept a tight lid on expenses, where possible, and are working to grow their revenues, or are at least keeping them stable. However, even for these organizations, the margin between financial success and failure is thin. Even for them, finances are the biggest challenge, and they are seeking new sources of funding and partnerships.

Inflationary pressures

[Analysis of a Statistics Canada survey in early 2023](#) showed that inflation was the most commonly cited obstacle among organizations and businesses in the arts, heritage, and entertainment, with 43% of Atlantic-based organizations believing that rising inflation is an obstacle for them.

New Brunswick cultural venues urgently need trust-based core funding.

59% of the venues surveyed identified “obtaining adequate government funding” as a top concern, while 62% of respondents went even further to cite it as the single “most important” factor in their future development. The inefficacy of “patchwork” funding models that rely on the production of myriad new initiatives or the perpetual reinvention of programming generate precarity and insecurity. Cultural venues need consistent, secure, core funding to ensure their sustainability and longevity. It is time for the provincial government to reframe arts and culture spending as a social and economic investment and increase funding to the arts.



Human Resources

More than 11,000 cultural workers in New Brunswick

[Analysis of data from the 2021 census](#) shows that there are 11,300 workers in arts, culture, and heritage occupations in New Brunswick. Cultural workers account for 2.7% of all 423,000 workers in the province, well below the national average of 4.4%. One out of every 37 workers in the province has a cultural occupation.

Of the 11,300 cultural workers, 3,900, or 34% are Francophones. This proportion matches the percentage of Francophones in New Brunswick’s labour force (34%). Both are the highest percentages of minority-language workers among the provinces.

Cultural venues, typically with small staff contingents, rely heavily on volunteers

Cultural venues in New Brunswick tend to be small. The survey for this project asked venues about their staffing at the end of their most recent fiscal year. Two was the most common number of staff members, and the median was 4.

Volunteers are vital to the province’s cultural venues. In fact, the venues that responded to the survey have three times more volunteers than staff members.

A much broader statistic, [based on findings from a Statistics Canada survey](#), shows that 44% of N.B. organizations in the arts, heritage, and entertainment rely on volunteers, higher than the national average for similar organizations (36%).

Staffing challenges

Many challenges of cultural venues may be related to their relatively small size:

- Venues struggle to offer competitive salaries and benefits. Roughly one-in-five venues (19%) said that they have no specific HR policies in place. About one-in-eight venues (12%) offer no benefits or opportunities to their staff members.
- Staff capacity is the third most common area of concern among venues.
- In the interviews, human resources were identified as a pressing concern by nearly all interviewees. Specific challenges include understaffing, staff shortages in certain areas, the risk of burnout, capacity challenges, a constant time crunch, and an inability to improve the benefits offered to staff members.
- Organizations in rural communities sometimes struggle to find qualified workers and contractors for certain roles.

Most venues believe that they foster a culture of trust and belonging among staff (reported as a strength by 62%), but

many struggle with human resource planning, including succession planning (reported as a concern by 44%).

Andrew Keirstead, Executive Director of the **Saint John Arts Centre**, succinctly outlined the situation of many organizations: “Staffing is always an issue.”

Multiple job-holding and unpaid work are significant challenges for cultural workers

An [analysis of Statistics Canada data](#) shows that employees in the arts and culture in New Brunswick are much more likely to have multiple jobs than other workers in the province. In 2023, the multiple job-holding rate among arts and culture employees was 10.7%, compared with just 4.6% for all employed workers.

While historical data for the province have been erratic (possibly due to a relatively small sample size), the multiple job-holding rate in the arts and culture has seemed to increase slightly over time. The multiple job-holding rate in the province was higher in 2023 (10.7%) than in 1997 (9.3%).

The survey for this project found that, in most venues, staff members do extra unpaid work: 78% of survey respondents (mostly senior staffers) reported that they or

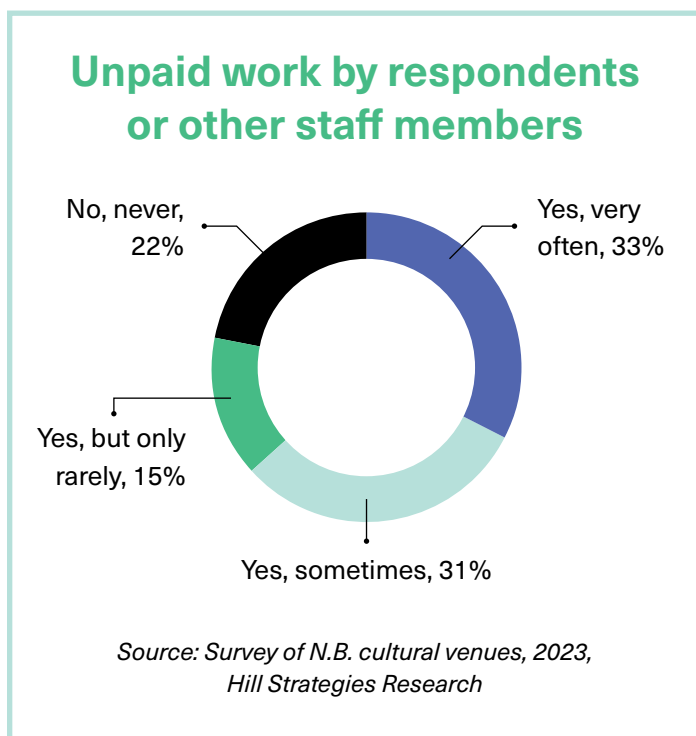
other staff members do unpaid work, in addition to their regular tasks. One-third reported doing unpaid work “very often”, as shown in the accompanying graph.

Mental health challenges are common among cultural workers

The broader arts, entertainment, and information sector has long been a challenging workspace for mental health: [this sector had the highest levels of diagnoses of anxiety and depression pre-COVID-19](#). Over one-quarter of workers in the sector were diagnosed with each condition – before COVID-19.

In this context, it is disheartening that a mental health support program (Bouée), which was available via the AAAPNB, is no longer offered due to a lack of funding. Some Francophone interviewees noted that this type of support is welcome and needed in the cultural community.

[Broad statistics](#) indicate that 42% of organizations or businesses in the arts, heritage, and entertainment in Canada have (or plan to have) some type of mental health support for their workers, a proportion that is essentially equal to the average for all industries (41%). The proportion is very similar among N.B.-based organizations or businesses in the arts, heritage, and entertainment (40%).



Low incomes of cultural workers

In 2020, a typical cultural worker in N.B. had total personal income of \$42,800, 4% less than all workers in the province (\$44,800), despite the typically high levels of education and training among cultural workers.

An analysis of other Statistics Canada data reaffirms the finding that arts and culture workers tend to earn less than workers in similar positions in other industries:

- The median wages of employed workers in “professional” occupations in the arts and culture are [\\$10 below the median wages of professional workers in other industries](#).
- The median wages of employed workers in “technical” occupations in the arts and culture are [\\$4 below professional workers in other industries](#).

There is a clear correlation between the insecurity generated by precarious funding models and high levels of overwork among arts workers.

Working in a sector that pays them on average 4% less than other industries, arts workers contribute huge amounts of unpaid labour—78% admitted to doing unpaid overtime in addition to their regular tasks—and frequently work multiple jobs. Unlike most industries, in addition to their workload, arts workers must often secure grants and fundraise for their own salaries. This kind of exploitation has been shown to increase levels of stress and burnout among workers, and yet there is no renewable funding for programs like the AAAPNB’s successful mental health program Bouée. As there is a higher-than-average sectoral need, governments should support service organizations like ArtsLink NB and the AAAPNB to implement province-wide mental health support programs for artists and arts workers. Governments must provide sustainable funding for mental health programs to combat overwork, unpaid labour, and burnout in the arts sector.



Community Engagement

Community engagement by arts organizations can be thought of as activities that “engage constituents and publics in order to align organizational goals, programs, and services with community interests and needs”. (Source: [Animating Democracy](#), from Americans for the Arts) Activities are “designed to build deep relationships between the organization and the communities in which it operates for the purpose of achieving mutual benefit... The arts and community are equal partners.” (Source: [Engaging Matters](#) blog) These descriptions are consistent with the not-for-profit nature of most cultural venues: the main goal of most venues is to create meaning and impact rather than to generate profits.

New Brunswick cultural venues are working hard to develop and sustain community-rooted, mutually beneficial practices. The survey of venues found that community engagement is perceived as a key area of strength and that venues believe that they have significant impacts in their communities through their engagement practices. The interviews revealed how venues are engaging their communities, extending well beyond their audience members.

Most cultural venues have recently increased their community engagement activities. Common engagement activities include artist or author talks, professional development activities, and participatory creative experiences.

Important impacts in communities across the province

According to their self-assessments in the survey, venues see themselves as playing a major role in enhancing the arts, heritage, and creativity in their communities:

- 91% believe that they have a very important role in connecting people with the arts, culture, and heritage.
- 82% believe that they have a very important role in fostering individuals’ creativity.
- 71% believe that they have a very important role in developing and supporting artists.

In addition to these culture-specific impacts, most venues believe that they have a very important role in:

- Enhancing community well-being (69%)
- Fostering a sense of identity (69%)
- Supporting intercultural exchange and dialogue (56%)
- Contributing to economic development (55%)
- Attracting and retaining residents (53%)
- Improving residents' health and well-being (52%)

Atlantic residents believe in the benefits of the arts and culture

Analysis of a [national population survey, with regional data](#), showed that a large proportion of Atlantic residents agree that the arts and culture have many impacts on them and their communities:

- Arts and culture is a valuable way of bringing together people from different languages and cultural traditions (84% agree, including 37% strongly).
- Arts and cultural activities make communities better places to live (83% agree, including 39% strongly).
- Arts and cultural events are important to respondents' quality of life (66% said important, including 21% very important).

Spaces of reflection and lasting impact

It was clear from the interviews that the province's cultural venues are trying to be spaces of reflection, conversation, and lasting impact on people's lives. Venues are striving to better understand their communities and deepen their connections.

Many examples of community engagement activities were discussed in the interviews, including:

- Teaching students about Indigenous practices such as drumming, blessings, and Powwow activities (**Fort Folly First Nation**).
- Providing engagement opportunities between visual artists in residence and community members (**Struts Gallery**, Sackville).
- Ensuring that touring and local artists have meaningful engagements in the community, including in seniors' homes and schools (**Imperial Theatre**, Saint John).
- Using curatorial choices to further social goals such as human rights and equality (**Gallery on Queen**, Fredericton).
- Working with many community organizations to further a variety of social and artistic goals (**Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen**, Moncton).

"Incredible connection" to local communities

Many interviewees spoke of how their location affects their community connections. A few examples:

- For Annie Chiasson, co-owner of **Librairie Pélagie** (Shippigan and Caraquet), "you have to be close to your community" to run a successful arts organization (in her case, for-profit bookstores on the Acadian Peninsula). She also noted that books touch a lot of people, who in return have become quite attached to the bookstore. "It's an incredible connection."
- Before the **Centre culturel de Caraquet** was established in 2003, there were few performing arts offerings on the Acadian Peninsula. Lucie Roy (Head of Events) noted that residents love what the organization has to offer from both local and visiting artists. She often hears that people feel lucky that their small town has such good shows available.

- An artist residency program allows the **Kingsbrae International Residence for the Arts & Amphitheatre** (St. Andrews) to connect with its community. During an artist's residence, there is an open studio most Saturdays and a full exhibition at the end of their residence. Kingsbrae has almost 350 members in a town of about 1,800 people.

Community engagement is perceived as an area of strength

In the survey, two areas that involve significant community connections stood out as self-perceived strengths of N.B. cultural venues:

- Developing and maintaining community partnerships: considered a strength by 53% of responding venues, a concern by just 13%, with 33% somewhere in between (or both a strength and a concern).
- Community engagement or outreach: considered a strength by 52% of respondents, a concern by 16%, with 31% somewhere in between (or both).

Almost all cultural venues (94%) collaborate or are engaged with other groups or businesses. Many engage with schools, organizations that welcome newcomers, governments, and business associations. Responding venues could select multiple areas of society, and they selected an average of 5.5 types of organizations with which they collaborate or are active.

Goal: Increased engagement

Venues continue to develop relationships and increase their engagement in their communities. Many interviewees spoke of their engagement goals, for example:

- The **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen** wants to reach out to new people and organizations to ensure its community impacts and to build a larger and more diverse audience.
- **Mawi'Art**, as a pan-Atlantic organization, would like to connect with more artists and participants across the Atlantic region, in part by establishing offices and programs in other provinces.

Cultural venues make communities better places to live.

83% of the venues surveyed agree that "arts and culture activities make communities better places to live." 84% of respondents also agreed (37% strongly agreed) that "arts and culture is a valuable way of bringing people together from different languages and cultural traditions." Working with municipalities, the province should conduct evidence-based research on the role cultural venues play in population growth and social determinants of health in New Brunswick. While this correlation is clear to those working in the sector, the scope of the social and economic benefits their work provides is currently unknown.



Truth and Reconciliation

With much focus on Truth and Reconciliation, there have been increasing levels of connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. For example, many non-Indigenous venues indicated that they are trying to ensure that Indigenous artists are well represented in their programming. As such, these non-Indigenous venues are engaging many Indigenous artists to show works and lead arts learning sessions.

No venues are more engaged in or affected by Truth and Reconciliation than Indigenous organizations, two of which were included in the interviews. Both Nicole Porter (Cultural Coordinator, **Fort Folly First Nation**) and Chloe Keith-Barnaby (Project Coordinator, **Mawi'Art**) said that they have noticed an increase in interest in Indigenous cultural experiences from non-Indigenous people.

Mawi'Art has observed an interesting conundrum for some Indigenous organizations: they need to be cognizant of guidelines laid out by non-Indigenous partners and funding organizations, but they also need to maintain cultural integrity by behaving like the culture in which they work.

In the survey of venues conducted for this project, 78% of respondents believe that they play an important role in exposing people to Indigenous arts and cultures, including 44% who said very important. However, more responding venues considered the advancement of Truth and Reconciliation an area of concern than an area of strength.

About one-quarter of respondents said that they have produced and/or presented works focused on Truth and Reconciliation in the past year. One example from the interviews: Lucie Roy (**Centre culturel de Caraquet**) mentioned that the Centre presented an Indigenous SLAM poet, who told the story of her people through her poetry. This appeared to have a profound impact on the people in attendance.

Beyond ensuring appropriate Indigenous representation, the interviews findings show that non-Indigenous organizations are in various places in their journeys to connect with Indigenous Peoples and organizations.

Truth and Reconciliation must move from “an area of concern” to an area of strength.

While there is a clear desire among the venues surveyed to advance reconciliation, there is less evidence this work is being done. For example, 46% of survey respondents said they had “a substantial focus on Indigenous peoples,” but only 2.3% of venues specifically serve Indigenous communities. In general, venues seem to be doing a better job “exposing people to Indigenous arts and culture” (44% felt their contributions in this area were “very important”) than “supporting Indigenous cultural sovereignty” (only 33% felt their work in this area was “very important”). Similarly, while nearly one half (49%) of venues presented work created by Indigenous people, substantially less presented work focused on Truth and Reconciliation (26%) or Indigenous cultural sovereignty (24%). Once again, inadequate and/or precarious core funding likely plays a significant role in this disconnect. The effect of language barriers between Indigenous and Acadian communities should also not be overlooked.



New Brunswick Artists

Venues have a central role in promoting and supporting the province's artists. In the survey, 71% of respondents indicated that they have a very important role in developing and supporting artists. (Another 25% judged their role to be "important".)

The survey probed venues' work with professional and/or amateur artists and found that:

- Venues predominantly support artists from New Brunswick: 2,160 of all 3,532 artists with which 45 responding venues worked hail from New Brunswick. (Some artists might have been engaged by multiple venues, and the above total is not directly comparable to the number of professional artists in the province.)
- Many venues struggle to adhere to minimum industry fee scales for artists (e.g., CARFAC, SOCAN): 29% of venues who work with professional artists do not adhere to minimum fee scales, and another 23% do so only sometimes. The remaining 48% always adhere to minimum fee scales. Of note, all 7 venues who work only with professional artists always pay minimum fees.

Cultural venues interviewed for this project described their deep connections with local artists, as well as the development of the cultural community that they are pursuing:

- **Mawi'Art** indicated that the organization's biggest impact might be on artists, for whom it provides paid opportunities to conduct workshops as well as opportunities to show their work in downtown Fredericton. Natasha Martin-Mitchell (Project Manager) noted that "it's all about helping artists, as entrepreneurs, succeed and have an impact". The organization consults with and builds relationships with many Indigenous artists.
- The **Centre culturel Aberdeen** highlighted the fact that its building is a cultural hub in Moncton, one that promotes collaboration and synergy. The Centre provides crucial space for a large number of organizations and events. The Centre culturel Aberdeen also highlighted its significant economic impact for cultural workers. The Centre spends

roughly \$300,000 per year on fees to artists and other cultural workers.

- The **Haven Music Hall**, a for-profit organization, is both directly and indirectly involved in the professionalization of artists. In particular, the organization helps teach emerging musicians how to work in the industry as a professional, including interacting with venues and attendees. Similarly, the for-profit **Gallery on Queen** works closely with emerging artists to help them understand the realities of the visual art world.
- **Kingsbrae International Residence for the Arts & Amphitheatre** has received very positive feedback from artists who have had residencies there. The artists indicated that they loved the experience, the attention given to their work, and the opportunity to focus solely on their art.

2,700 professional artists in New Brunswick

Based on the 2021 census, a [statistical report](#) found that there are 2,700 professional artists in New Brunswick. This represents 0.6% of the provincial labour force, which is much lower than the national average (1.0%). In N.B., one out of every 158 people who work is an artist.

New Brunswick is the only province where craftspeople are the largest artist occupation. In most provinces, musicians are the most common artist occupation, but that occupation is slightly outnumbered by craftspeople in New Brunswick.

There are 850 Francophone artists in New Brunswick, accounting for 32% of all artists in the province, which is tied with Quebec for the highest minority-language percentage among the provinces.

New Brunswick is one of two provinces where rural and small-town artists represent over one-half of all artists. The [1,500 rural and small-town artists represent 55% of the province's artists](#). (Rural and small-town artists represent 59% of all artists in Prince Edward Island.) In

New Brunswick, 41% reside in the province's three largest cities (Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John), while these cities account for 28% of all N.B. workers.

Census-based statistics show that artists in New Brunswick operate at a significant financial disadvantage, with personal incomes that are 39% lower than other workers. That disadvantage carries over into household incomes that are 19% lower than other workers.

Artists in New Brunswick tend to have:

- High education levels: 41% have a bachelor's degree or higher, nearly double the percentage of all N.B. workers (23%).
- A very high self-employment rate: 58% are self-employed, nearly six times higher than the percentage of all N.B. workers (10%).
- Very low incomes: The median personal income of artists (from all sources) was \$27,400 in 2020, 39% below that of all New Brunswick workers (\$44,800) and 9% below the median of all Canadian artists (\$30,200).

Of the province's artists, 57% are women, which is much higher than the proportion of all workers in the province (48%) and slightly higher than that of all Canadian artists (54%).

New Brunswick artists face a devastating wage gap.

New Brunswick artists make 39% less than workers in other fields, despite their comparatively high education levels (41% of artists have a bachelor's degree compared with only 23% of the wider population). According to data gathered in the most recent census, the median employment income for New Brunswick artists was \$8,500, while the median personal income (from all sources) was \$27,400. This is unacceptable. What work has been done to address the 24 recommendations put forward in the 2021 Report of the *Premier's Taskforce on the Status of the Artist?* The arts community and all New Brunswickers deserve an update.



Attendance / Marketing

A significant part of running a cultural venue involves drawing attendees or participants to activities at the venue. From the survey, over 500,000 attendees were reached last year by the 40 venues that responded to that survey question. As noted below, the interviews highlighted some audience engagement activities of venues.

Libraries are important cultural venues, ensuring access to services and information for any member of the public who

decides to become a member. Libraries contribute to the literacy, education, and lifelong learning of New Brunswickers.

According to data for 2022 – 23 shared by the New Brunswick Public Library Service:

- Libraries had over 105,100 active borrowers, which represents 22% of the population of geographic areas served by the libraries.

- Even more people (323,700) are library patrons (i.e., members), or 68% of the population of libraries' service areas.
- In-person traffic was 1.4 million, representing an average of almost 4 visits per service-area resident.
- 2.1 million physical items were circulated, or 4.4 items per resident.
- 433,000 digital items were circulated, which is just under one item per service-area resident.

Audience engagement activities

While cultural venues themselves tend to draw the greatest benefit from audience development, this form of engagement also has broader community impacts.

Interviewees offered some examples of their audience engagement activities and the community benefits of these activities:

- Abigail Smith, co-owner of the **Haven Music Hall**, believes that the organization fills a gap in the local market for a small to mid-sized venue. This promotes the overall health of the local music scene by contributing to a “functioning ladder” of venue sizes. Overall, the Hall likes to emphasize the communal aspect of arts attendance: the organization sees itself as a curator of community gatherings.
- The **Imperial Theatre** has been trying to counter the perception that the arts can be elitist by showing and communicating how open and accessible the Theatre is to a wide variety of people. It has a robust “ambassadors” program for newcomers to the theatre, which has helped the organization build relationships with community members, especially immigrants.
- The workshop series from **Mawi'Art** included 43 workshops that drew 444 participants, about three-

quarters of whom are Indigenous. Chloe Keith-Barnaby noted that the workshop series was open to all and represents the largest public-facing endeavour in the organization's history. The organization received very positive feedback from the workshops, including one participant who noted how great a workshop was for the community it provided. Another participant indicated that they learned many skills that they can apply to their everyday life.

Attendance challenges

In the survey, many attendance-related issues were identified as significant concerns for cultural venues:

- Competition for people's time (e.g., “I'm too busy to do that”): concern for 60% of respondents and strength for just 4%, with 37% somewhere in between (or both a strength and a concern).
- Attracting a diverse range of audience members / participants: concern for 48% of respondents and strength for 16%, with 36% somewhere in between (or both).
- Attracting attendees or participants (especially post-pandemic): concern for 46% of respondents and strength for 21%, with 33% somewhere in between (or both).
- Generating earned revenues: concern for 42% of respondents and strength for 26%, with 32% somewhere in between (or both).

Interviewees pointed to specific attendance and marketing challenges. For example, it can be difficult to encourage people to spend money on art and to make arts activities outside the home a regular part of their busy lives. Regarding hands-on activities, some venues indicated that there appears to be a lack of awareness of the usefulness that arts-related learning has for a range of career choices and, more generally, in an increasingly visual and literate world.

At the time this report was published, the population estimate for New Brunswick was 855,355. In 2023, over 500,000 people attended arts and culture programming at the 40 venues that provided this data. As this figure represents 58% of the population, but only 40 of its cultural venues, it seems obvious that arts and culture venues are both central to New Brunswickers' daily life and important tourism engines.



Physical condition of N.B. cultural venues

Regarding venues' physical conditions, the survey found that roughly one-quarter of respondents believe that their venues are not in good condition.

More specifically, particularly large proportions of venues are not in good shape regarding equipment, HVAC, and physical accessibility:

- Equipment and HVAC: 39% are in fair, poor, or very poor condition (19% fair, 17% poor, and 3% very poor).
- Physical accessibility: 39% are in fair, poor, or very poor condition (22% fair, 13% poor, and 4% very poor).
- Overall physical condition: 23% are in fair, poor, or very poor condition (19% fair, 4% poor, and 0% very poor).

The overall findings are reasonably close to those from a [national survey of publicly-owned cultural venues](#), which found that 24% of performance spaces are considered to be in fair, poor, or very poor condition, as are 33% of art galleries.

During the interviews, venues noted that they face facilities-related challenges that include insufficient storage space, freezing pipes, faulty roofs and windows, outdated HVAC systems, and inadequate (or absent) fire suppression systems. Venues indicated that it is tough to find adequate funding for these needs, and some interviewees pointed out specific facilities upgrades that they would undertake if their venue received an infusion of cash (e.g., storage spaces, building facades, studio spaces, kitchen facilities).

Broader statistics on government-owned cultural venues

Statistics Canada estimates that there are [116 government-owned cultural facilities in New Brunswick](#), including 50 libraries, 32 performance / presentation spaces, 24 museums and archives, and 10 art galleries. New Brunswick and Quebec are the only provinces with more performance / presentation spaces than museums and archives.

Exactly one-half of the government-owned cultural facilities (including 33% of the performance and gallery spaces) are located in rural areas of the province.

The national survey allows for comparisons between the provinces. The proportion of government-owned performance spaces in poor or fair condition (i.e., not in good or very good condition) is highest in New Brunswick and British Columbia (both 39%, vs 24% nationally). On the other hand, there are relatively few government-owned galleries in poor or fair condition in New Brunswick (11%, vs 33% nationally).

Environment and innovation

The environment and cultural sector innovation are two other topics that were touched upon in the wide-ranging research for this project.

Environment

In 2023, nearly three-quarters of arts, heritage, and entertainment organizations and businesses in Canada reported that they have [engaged in some type of environmental practice or policy](#) (72%). The percentage of organizations with some type of environmental practice is even higher in New Brunswick (85%). Like most provinces, waste reduction is the most common current environmental practices among N.B. organizations (66%). Only 3% of N.B. organizations indicated that they have a written environmental policy in place.

The environment was occasionally mentioned in interviews for this project. Some interviewees spoke of promoting eco-consciousness through their programming and reducing their organizations' environmental footprints.

Significant innovation within the arts, culture, and heritage

In New Brunswick, a very high proportion of organizations and businesses in the arts, heritage, and entertainment (44%) have [innovated their products or processes since 2020](#). This is much higher than the percentage of all organizations and businesses in the province (19%) and is higher than the national average for the arts, heritage, and entertainment (37%).

The physical condition, geographic location, and environmental impact of arts venues have been neglected.

50% of the government-owned cultural facilities in New Brunswick are located in rural communities. Our research shows that 39% of the venues surveyed have physical infrastructure that is in “fair, poor or very poor condition” (as opposed to “good or very good”). According to a national survey, New Brunswick also has the highest percentage of performance venues in “fair or poor condition.” At the same time, only 3% of the venues surveyed have written environmental policies. One may speculate that funding disparities endemic to smaller communities lie at the intersection of these statistics. This is also reflected in the wage gap for New Brunswick artists, who make 39% less than workers in other fields—55% of these artists also live in rural areas and small towns. Unlike cultural organizations in larger urban centres, rural and small-town New Brunswick venues, artists, and arts workers are significantly disadvantaged by per capita funding models. As a result, they have smaller revenue streams and must contend with greater inequality of opportunity. Reinvesting in the province’s arts infrastructure is both timely and strategic, as there is an urgent need for green, accessible arts infrastructure, especially in rural communities and small-towns.

We celebrate the higher-than-average percentage (44% compared to 37% nationally) of “arts, heritage, and entertainment” organizations that have innovated their products or processes since 2020—despite no provincial emergency arts funding during the pandemic. We simultaneously question why government agencies and independent funders demand innovation and new projects from cultural venues while they remain stuck in outdated funding paradigms and processes.



Equity, diversity, and inclusion

The survey of venues conducted for this project probed a number of equity-related issues.

Regarding who created the works that venues produced or presented, most venues produced and/or presented works that were created by women (71%), youth (68%), LGBTQ2SIA+ people (54%), and the Francophone minority in New Brunswick (54%). Relatively few venues produced and/or presented works created by disabled people (17%) or unhoused people (5%) during their most recent fiscal year.

In terms of the subject matter of the works, two-thirds of venues said that they produced and/or presented works that were focused on youth, while exactly one-half produced and/or presented works focused on the province’s Francophone minority in the past year. Few

venues produced and/or presented works focused on low-income people (20%), disabled people (18%), responding or adapting to the climate emergency (15%), unhoused people (11%), or neurodivergent people (9%). Just over one-quarter of responding venues (28%) indicated that they do not focus on any of the equity-seeking groups listed in the question.

The interviews revealed that many venues are working to increase diversity and improve accessibility, such as through an equity and inclusion plan that can help make their sites, their programming, and the art works that they offer more accessible in both physical and other ways. Others have had their staff and board members receive training in equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Statistics on gender representation in the arts, culture, and heritage in New Brunswick

[An analysis of 2021 census data](#) revealed a substantial gap between the proportions of women artists (58%) and women arts leaders (47%) in New Brunswick.

Interestingly, the New Brunswick proportions are higher than the national averages for both types of positions:

- 58% of professional artists in New Brunswick are women, compared with 54% of all Canadian artists.
- 47% of workers in arts leadership positions in New Brunswick are women, compared with the national average of 42%.

As-yet-unpublished census data show that 53% of all cultural workers in New Brunswick are women, similar to the national average of 54%.

National statistics related to representation and equity

Other data, national in scope, indicate that:

- [Among artists](#), cisgender men have the highest median incomes (\$54,400), followed by cisgender women (\$45,600, or 16% less than cisgender men), transgender people (\$36,400, or 33% less than cisgender men), and gender diverse people (\$31,400, or 42% less than cisgender men).
- The same “hierarchy” of incomes is true for [all cultural workers](#).
- [Representation of Indigenous Peoples](#) is lower among arts leaders (2.7%) and cultural workers (3.0%) than artists (3.7%), and slightly lower among artists than all workers (4.2%).
- Indigenous artists and cultural workers tend to have [very low incomes](#).
- [Representation of racialized people](#) is lower among artists and other cultural workers than in the overall workforce.
- Racialized workers tend to have [particularly low incomes](#) in the arts and culture.
- [Representation of transgender and gender diverse people](#) is remarkably high among artists.

Inadequate funding perpetuates systemic pay inequities for women, gender minorities, Indigenous, and racialized people.

There are serious pay gaps for all women, transgender, gender non-conforming, Indigenous, and racialized artists and arts workers in New Brunswick. For example, 47% of arts workers in a leadership position in New Brunswick (compared with 42% nationally) are women whose incomes are 16% lower than cisgender men who occupy the same roles. The same is true for New Brunswick artists, 58% of whom (compared with 54% nationally) are women making 16% less than cis-male artists. The higher-than-average representation of women in arts leadership roles in the province should be a point of pride; however, the wage gap they face tells a different story: New Brunswick arts organizations are in crisis, and women are shouldering the burden. Similarly, while the representation and community contributions of transgender and gender diverse artists and arts workers is significantly high, their incomes are 33% and 42% less, respectively, than cis-gender men doing the same work.



Call to Action

Governments must **collaborate** with the arts sector to safeguard its health and vitality. This starts with acknowledging the critical role cultural venues play within the broader arts ecosystem and supporting them accordingly. By investing in these institutions, governments will:

- Support professional artists and the cultural labour force;
- Promote healthy, vibrant communities;
- Value cultural and linguistic collaboration;
- Preserve and celebrate New Brunswick's built heritage and community spaces;
- Support small businesses, tourism, and sustainable economic growth;
- Meaningfully address inequities faced by women, transgender, gender-diverse, Indigenous, and racialized artists; and
- Celebrate the strength and resilience of the cultural community in New Brunswick.

