

The Value of the Arts for Social Cohesion in Saskatchewan Communities

**A report prepared for the
Saskatchewan Arts Alliance by**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a random-sample telephone survey of the Saskatchewan population, which examined public perception of the arts and their value to our province. This study's goal was to produce empirical data on the value of arts at the community level—something that few studies have attempted. Drawing on concepts of cultural ecology and social capital, we examine public perceptions of the arts within Saskatchewan's urban and rural contexts. This research project utilizes a random-sample, quantitative telephone survey of 416 Saskatchewan residents. The survey and its data are one stage in a larger research study to examine the arts ecology of Saskatchewan. The study will move from the survey data to the next phase of the project involving community consultations throughout the province.

This project began with work completed by the Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research (SPAR), and also deepens existing work conducted by Canada Heritage in 2016 (Hill, 2019), which examined participation by Canadians in the arts. The Canada Heritage study demonstrated Canadians' active participation in the arts. In 2016, 86% of Canadians fifteen or older attended an arts activity, such as a performing arts event or artistic or cultural festival (68%), an art gallery (39%), or a movie theatre (71%) (25.3 million Canadians) (Hill, 2019, pp. 1-2). As well, 85% of Canadians reported strong support for the many benefits that arts and culture bring to our society (CHCCA, Department of Canadian Heritage and Canada Council for the Arts, 2017, p. 2). While existing national studies have lacked an in-depth examination of Saskatchewan, in 2015 SPAR published the first known study examining the role of artists and the arts in Saskatchewan communities. The present study expands on the work of both of these previous studies by examining:

- a) The role of the arts in fostering community cohesion;
- b) The perceived social value of the arts in Saskatchewan;
- c) Significant barriers and facilitators of social capital within Saskatchewan rural and urban communities.

Key findings from this study include:

- a) About half the respondents were involved in the arts in some way;
- b) Broad consensus that the arts are important for society and their community;
- c) A large majority of children under 25, and respondents with children, are involved in the arts;
- d) Women and Canadian-born participants were more likely than other groups to be involved in the arts;
- e) Indigenous respondents found the arts to be important in areas of societal and community life;
- f) Non-Canadian Born respondents found the Arts to be important in areas of societal and community life.

The current study stands as the first part of a much larger research project using multiple research methods to understand the complex arts community within Saskatchewan. This report highlights major quantitative trends in Saskatchewan community members' perceptions of the arts. The second half of this project will aim to examine these trends at a deeper level to understand major facilitators and barriers faced by the arts community.

INTRODUCTION

According to recent statistics from Canadian Heritage, 85% of Canadians feel strong support for the many benefits that arts and culture bring to our society (CHCCA, 2017, p. 2). Some of the benefits they highlighted include providing a valuable way of bringing people together, helping people think and work creatively, and improving individuals' well-being (CHCCA, 2017). Canadians clearly identify many social and individual benefits of arts and culture at the community level.

In 2016, 86% of Canadians fifteen or older attended an arts activity, such as a performing arts event or artistic or cultural festival (68%), an art gallery (39%), or a movie theatre (71%) (25.3 million Canadians) (Hill, 2019, pp. 1-2). The arts are also an important aspect of tourism for the country. With regards to domestic tourism, in 2016 live performances alone brought in \$378.8 million in domestic tourism spending, along with other arts activities including visual and applied arts (\$289.3 million) and written and published works (\$278.8 million) (Canadian Heritage, 2018). Beyond the economic value of the arts, Saskatchewan communities benefit from an enriched quality of life, improving people's sense of identity, contentment, confidence, self-esteem and enjoyment (Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture, and Sport, 2010). The arts also increase social vibrancy, inclusion, and civic engagement (Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture, and Sport, 2010).

The current study builds upon the success of the Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research (SPAR) project (Blackstone, Hage, & McWilliams, 2016), a cultural ecology research partnership between the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, Saskatchewan Arts Board, Sask Culture, and the University of Regina. The SPAR study has been recognized globally as one of the first studies to examine arts ecology. The goal of the project was to examine the role of artists and the arts in Saskatchewan communities. The SPAR study addressed some notable gaps in research through its focus on rural areas, which set it apart from existing studies in Europe and the United States. As well, the SPAR study had a quantitative grounding in survey data derived from the public, compared to other studies that are based on qualitative interview data. The study found a high level of public engagement and support for the arts, including a high level of personal, social, and cultural benefits attributed to the arts by the public. SPAR also identified the importance of connectedness and social networks for artists' success.

One of the ways the SPAR project differed from the current project was in its usage of convenience sampling technique, which cannot be generalized to the entire province. Therefore, one of the goals of the present study was to utilize a random sampling technique to obtain a statistically representative sample of the Saskatchewan people. The current project built on this study and also helps corroborate, and potentially identify areas of divergence from, the SPAR findings. What is largely missing from the previous literature is examining the position of the arts and artists themselves within their community. It is important to understand the impact that this sector has on the community as it is often highlighted as beneficial to communities, but lacks a depth of understanding. Often this can result in mixed messages on why and what support is needed for

artists and the arts sector, particularly in smaller communities. This project highlights the effect of arts engagement on community vitality, interconnectedness, and overall social sustainability.

Objectives

The survey was initiated by the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance (SAA), a non-profit coalition of arts organizations that advocates on issues related to the arts in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, 2019a). Formally established in 1964, the SAA advocates for such issues as public funding for the arts and artists, freedom of expression, and improved working conditions for artists (Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, 2019a). The SAA provides information and creates a forum for issues affecting the arts and cultural industries. The organization engages in evidence-based advocacy and community-based research. One of their latest research efforts, which includes the survey reported here, is currently producing a deeper understanding of the arts ecology in Saskatchewan.

Understanding the arts ecology of Saskatchewan will create greater understanding of the arts' contributions to economic growth and sustainability and to the cultural fabric of communities (Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, 2019b). The research aims to distinguish the arts ecology in Saskatchewan's urban and rural areas. Understanding the arts ecology illustrates how it impacts quality of life, as well as what is needed to support that growth.

Through this study, the SAA has sought to examine the broad scope and long-term nature of this topic through a multi-disciplinary effort (Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, 2019b). Therefore, the SAA has gathered a multi-disciplinary team of researchers and community partners. Results from the study will be applied to areas such as arts programming and policy initiatives (Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, 2019b).

This study seeks to empirically examine the value of arts at the community level—something that few studies have attempted. Drawing on concepts of cultural ecology and social capital, we examine public perceptions of the arts within Saskatchewan's urban and rural contexts. This research project utilizes a random-sample, quantitative telephone survey. The survey and its data are one stage in an overall larger research study which began with work completed by SPAR to examine the arts ecology of Saskatchewan. The study will move from the survey data to the next phase of the project involving community consultations throughout the province. Through this research design this study seeks to meet several objectives, including:

- a) To examine the role of arts in fostering community cohesion;
- b) To identify the social value of the arts in Saskatchewan;
- c) To potentially expose significant barriers and facilitators of social capital within Saskatchewan rural and urban communities.

The study is guided by two key concepts: cultural ecology and social capital. Cultural ecology widens the perspective through which to examine the arts in Saskatchewan. Cultural ecology is defined by Markussen and colleagues (2011) as “the complex interdependence that shape[s] the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings (p.8)”, while social capital investigates the nature and extent of the impacts of social relationships [within that cultural ecology] (Szeter & Woolcock, 2004). The

overall research project seeks to provide theoretical and empirical contributions to the diverse field of arts ecology and social capital in particular. This study will ultimately contribute to the work of arts organizations and cultural policy development.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Analysis

This study is based on primary data collected on behalf of the SAA by the University of Saskatchewan's Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL).¹ Data collection was conducted using WinCATI telephone interviewing software. Data were collected using the *Arts Ecosystem Survey*, administered as a 10-minute telephone survey from Jan 8-15, 2019. The survey included three main sections: 1) Demographics; 2) Arts Connections; and 3) Artists/Arts Importance. The survey was administered among randomly selected residents 18 years old or older living within the province of Saskatchewan. The survey was adapted from the public survey used previously by SPAR, with new questions added and a few questions modified.

The survey was analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences); a social statistical analysis software. A weighted variable was used in the findings section, on any comparison analyses. The open-ended responses from the survey were analyzed qualitatively and grouped based on emergent themes.

Sample

The survey resulted in 416 completed interviews among randomly selected residents. The results of the survey are generalizable to the total population with a margin of error of $\pm 5.00\%$. The majority of the respondents of this survey were female (67%; n=257), 55 years or older (65%; n = 249), and had at least some University or technical school education (68%; n=263). Respondents were most likely to report working for pay, either full-time or part-time (35%; n=133) or being retired (48%; n=183); this might be due to the higher age range of the sample. The majority of participants reported an income between \$25,000 and \$100,000 (47%; n=179). A large majority of the respondents were born in Canada (93%; n=358), and were not Indigenous (95%; n=365). In terms of geographical representation, most participants reported living in smaller cities within the province (37%; n=141), in Saskatoon (33%; n=126), or in Regina (24%; n=91), with few participants living in rural areas (5%; n=20). See *Table 1* for more information about the sample of participants in this study.

¹ SSRL is a network of nine research labs based at the University of Saskatchewan. They work to assist faculty, staff, students and community members undertaking research in the social sciences by providing access to specialized research infrastructure, research space, and providing access to research support in the form of specialists with background and training in specific social science research methodologies (Social Science Research Lab, 2019).

Table 1: Sample Demographics

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
AGE			
	18-34	28	7
	35-54	96	25
	55+	249	65
GENDER IDENTITY			
	Female	257	67
	Gender on-Conforming	1	0.3
	Male	124	32
EDUCATION			
	Some High School or High School Diploma	116	30
	Some Technical School/ Community College or Diploma	93	24
	Some University or University Degree	170	44
EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENT			
	Retired	183	48
	Working for Pay	133	35
	Self-Employed	32	8
	Unemployed/ Looking for Work	12	3
	Caring for Child(ren)/ Family Member(s)	9	2
	Disabled	8	2
	Student	7	2
COUNTRY OF BIRTH			
	Born in Canada	358	93
	Born Outside of Canada	26	7
INDIGENOUS STATUS			
	Indigenous	19	5
	Non-Indigenous	365	95
REGION			
	Smaller Cities	141	37
	Saskatoon	126	33
	Regina	91	24
	Rural Areas	20	5

FINDINGS

Section A: Arts Connections

This section will examine the responses to questions about individuals’ arts connections, including answers from the general public as well as artists in the province.

Personal Involvement in the Arts

The first set of questions examined Saskatchewan residents’ personal involvement in any arts activities. About half the respondents were involved in the arts in some way (54%; n=206), while the remainder were either not involved in the arts (46%; n=177) or chose not to answer the question (n=1). This response is echoed nationally in a study conducted by the Department of Canadian Heritage and Canada Council for the Arts (CHCCA) as more than half (53%) of all Canadians reported being involved in an artistic activity in the past year (CHCCA, 2017). In comparison with other provinces, participation in any arts activities was highest in Saskatchewan (65%) and B.C. (61%) (CHCCA, 2017). When our dataset includes professional artists, there was a slight increase in participants’ involvement in the arts (from 54% to 57%).

Those who were personally involved in the arts were then asked to list the arts disciplines that they were involved in. **A large number of respondents reported that they were most likely to be involved in music or painting.** Participants listed a diverse array of activities spanning various disciplines in the performing arts, ranging from drama/theatre, dancing or music, visual arts and crafting, including; painting, drawing, quilting/sewing/ knitting/crocheting, and pottery/sculpting; literary arts, including creative writing or calligraphy; electronic, recording and media arts including photography, to cultural arts such as attending museums, exhibits, or concerts. Some less frequently mentioned arts disciplines included architecture, woodworking, and stain glass., with a few respondents classifying fitness or yoga, as artistic endeavors. These results can be seen in *Figure 1*.

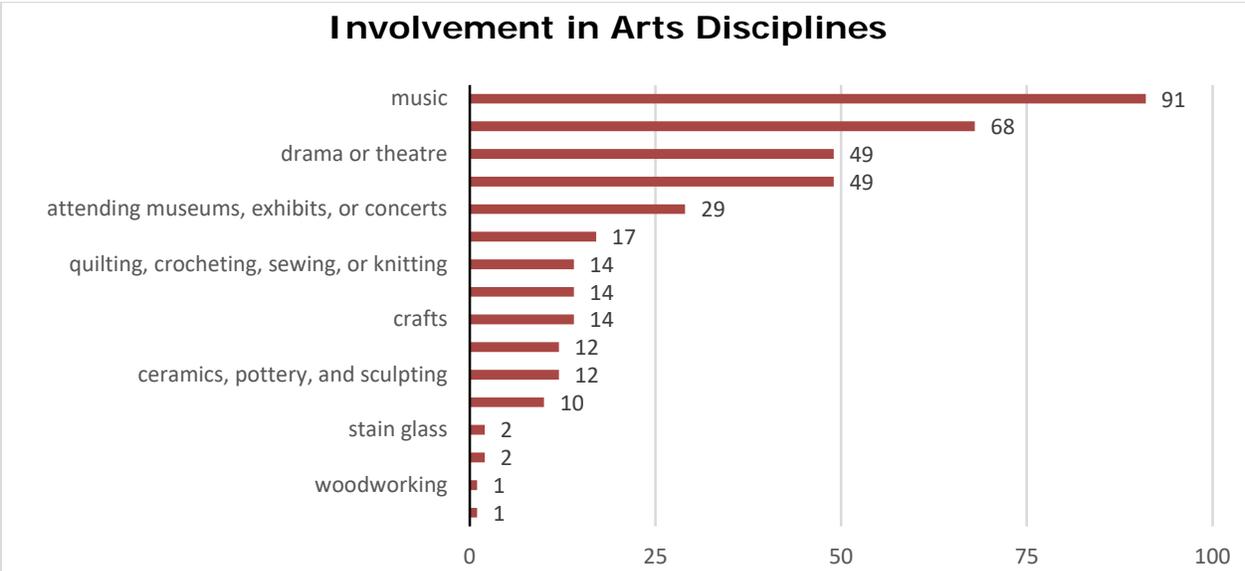


Figure 1: Involvement in Arts Disciplines

Participants were asked if they had supported or participated in an arts organization as a member, volunteer, donor, or fan/audience member within the past three years. **The majority of respondents reported being a fan or audience member** (60%; n= 230), with some participants also reporting being a volunteer (13%; n=51), a donor (13%; n=48), or a member (9%; n=33). This can be seen below in *Figure 2*. When the dataset includes professional artists there was a slight increase in supporting arts organizations as a fan (60.3%), volunteer (15.4%), or member (11.8%) and a slight decrease in supporting as a donor (14.9%).

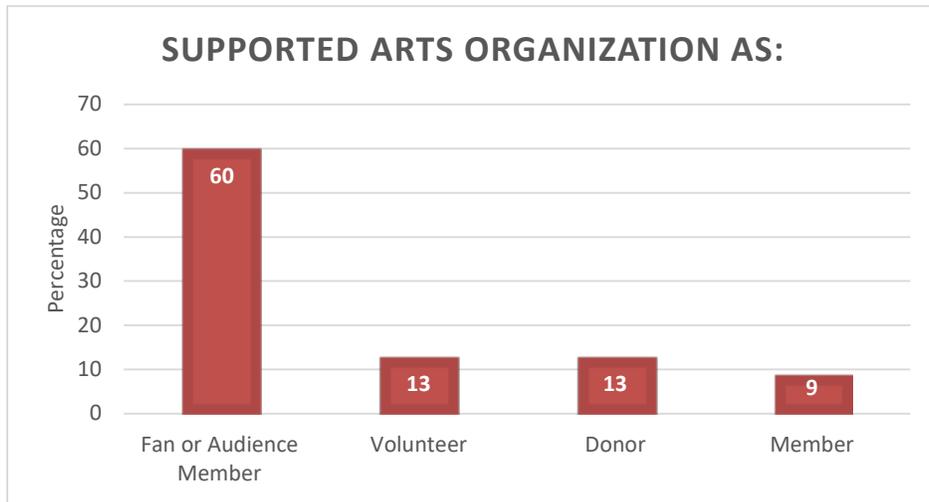


Figure 2: Forms of Arts Organization Support

Relationship with Professional Artists

The study also explored social networks involving the arts community. Participants were asked how many professional artists they personally know, with most not knowing any professional artists (35%; n=136). However, 12% of respondents knew one professional artist (n=47), 27% knew two to four professional artists (n=103), 12% knew five to nine professional artists (n=47), and 12% knew ten or more professional artists. Seven participants did not know how many professional artists they know (1.8%). The results are presented in *Figure 3*.

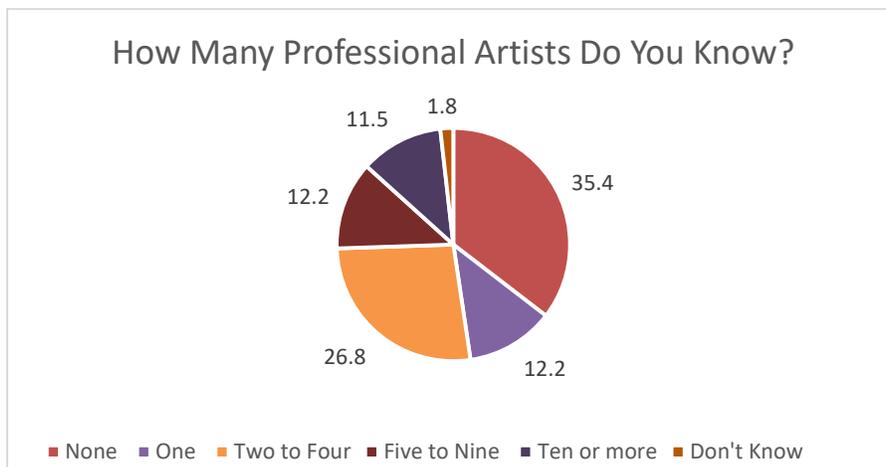


Figure 3: Knowledge of Professional Artists

Section B: Arts Importance

Influence of the Arts

This section asked participants a series of questions regarding the importance of the arts. The respondents were asked to respond on a Likert scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). The results can be seen in *Figure 4*.

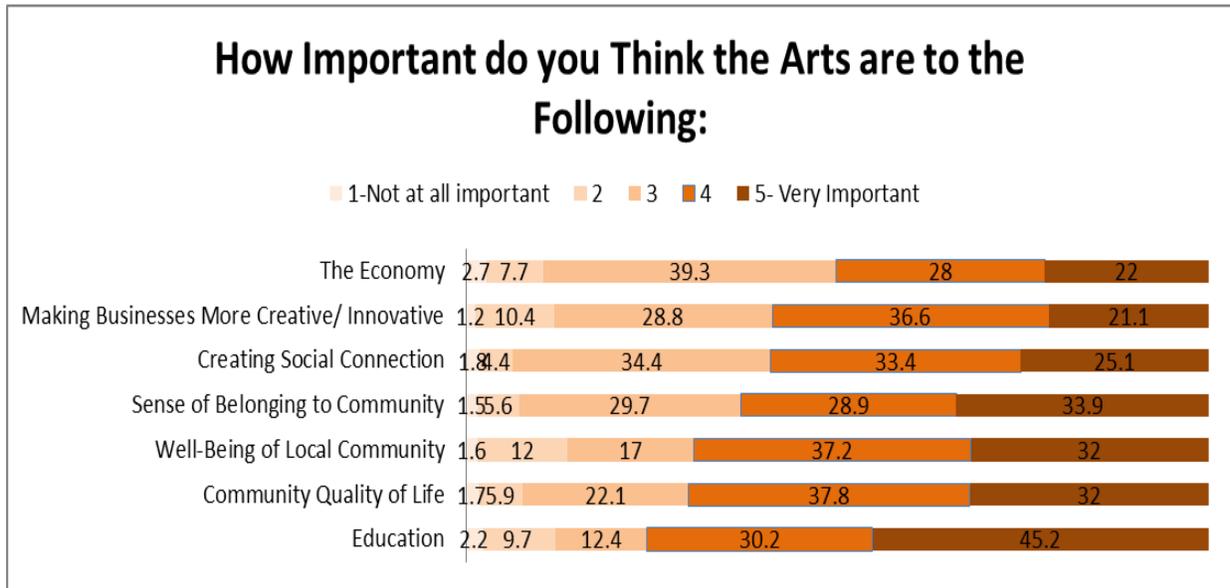


Figure 4: Importance of the Arts

As Figure 4 displays, **respondents placed the highest importance on the arts for education**, and the least importance on the economy. This response was echoed in the research conducted by SPAR, which found 85% of respondents ranked the contributions of the arts as important or very important to all levels of education (SPAR, 2015b, p. 24). Other areas where the arts are important include: the sense of belonging to community, well-being of the local community, and the community’s overall quality of life.

Frequency of Engagement in the Arts

Participants were then asked how frequently they engage with the arts as an audience member, consumer, creator, or interpreter. As can be seen by figure 5, **almost half (43.8%) of respondents reported that they engage in the arts daily** (n=168), while the next highest numbers engaged weekly or monthly engagement which each had an equal number of respondents (18%; n=69). *Figure 5* shows the results.

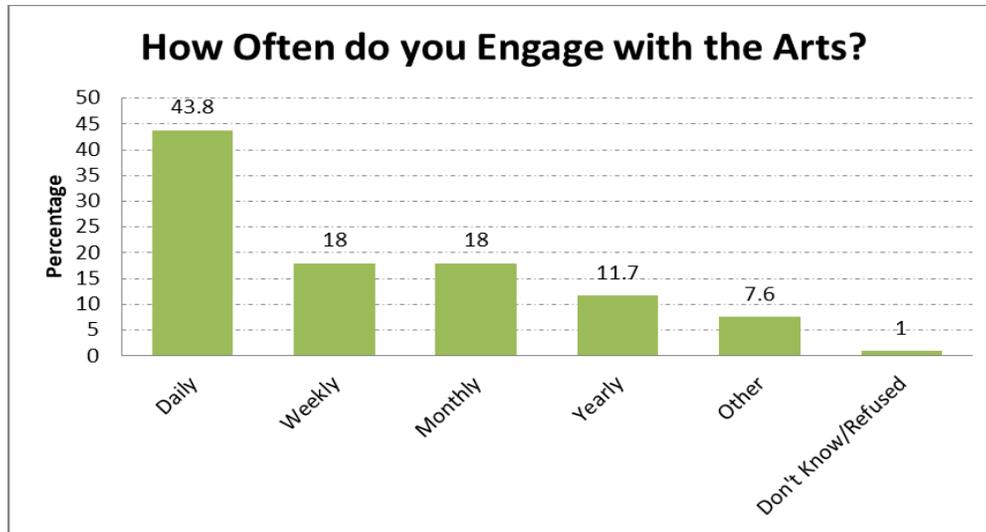


Figure 5: Frequency of Engagement with the Arts

Children’s Relationship with the Arts

Another important set of questions sought to understand the engagement in the arts by respondents with children under the age of 25. Respondents were asked if they have children aged 25 or younger, with 30% of respondents stating that they do (n=115), and the remaining 70% of respondents reported having no children under the age of 25 (n=269).

Among the respondents that did have children 25 and younger, **the majority reported that their children had access to arts education (95%; n=109)**, with the remaining few reporting that they either did not have access to arts education or that they didn’t know (5%; n=6).

The respondents reported a wide variety of ways that their children accessed arts education, with most stating through school (87%; n=95), or through lessons outside of school (58%; n=63). Other ways included either through an art or cultural organization (31%; n=34) or through other means (14%; n=15) such as the library, family, online learning, or books.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Findings

Over half of respondents are involved in the arts

A little over half of the respondents reported being involved in the arts (54%; n=206). Those individuals who did report involvement were largely engaged in the arts daily (44%; n=168), while some also reported engagement weekly (18%; n=69) or monthly (18%; n=69). Of these participants a large portion of individuals reported that they participated in a music discipline (n=91), while others listed a variety of other disciplines including other performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, cultural arts, and digital/ recording/ media arts. Respondents also indicated their involvement in an

arts organization as either a fan/audience member (60%; n=230), a member (9%; n=33); a volunteer (13%); or a donor (13%; n =48).

Broad consensus that the arts are important for society and their community

Generally, the respondents thought that the arts are important or very important to society for a wide variety of reasons. Most importantly was to education (75%), community quality of life (70%), community well-being (69%), community sense of belonging (63%), social connection (59%), making businesses more creative/innovative (58%), and the economy (50%). This highlights the social and economic value that participants place on the arts in the greater society and community life. What can be seen here is the higher emphasis being placed on education but also the various social roles that the arts play in sustaining and creating meaningful connections within that community.

A large majority of children under 25, and respondents with children, are involved in the arts

Another important factor for arts participation is whether respondents had young children. Thirty percent of respondents reporting having children younger than 25, and 95% of these children, had access to arts education, generally through school (87%), lessons outside school (58%), or cultural organizations (31%). Respondents with children under the age of 25 were also more likely to have been personally involved in the arts, compared to respondents with no children. Respondents with children were more likely to place greater importance on the arts for education, making businesses more creative and innovative, and the well-being of the community.

Women and Canadian-born participants were more likely to be involved in the arts

Overall, women respondents were more likely than men to report being personally involved in the arts. However, men were more likely to be involved in the arts on a daily basis compared to women. Another important difference was that women tended to place greater importance on the arts compared to men, which could explain why women were more likely to be personally involved in the arts. Women were more likely to state that the arts played an important role in most of the categories.

Individuals born outside of Canada were less likely to be involved in the arts compared to Canadian-born participants. Furthermore, immigrants were also less likely to engage in the arts on a daily basis compared to Canadian-born participants.

Indigenous respondents found the arts to be important in areas of societal and community life

Although not statistically significant due to sample characteristics, some notable trends were found amongst Indigenous and immigrant respondents. Almost all Indigenous respondents (94.5%) found the arts to be very important for education, compared with 43% of non-Indigenous respondents. There were also relatively large differences with regard to the importance of the arts on community well-being, with over half of Indigenous respondents (63.9%) reporting that the arts are very important to community well-being compared to 30.6% of non-Indigenous respondents. Another area of importance is social connection, for which half of Indigenous respondents (53.7%) found

the arts very important compared with 23.8% of non-Indigenous respondents. These findings are reflected in the involvement and frequency of engagement with the arts from the Indigenous respondents: over half of these respondents (54%) reported involvement in the arts which is slightly more than non-Indigenous respondents (48.4%). However, when asked about how frequently they engage with the arts, over a quarter of Indigenous respondents reported yearly engagement (35.8%) followed by daily engagement as the next most common response (33.4%).

Non-Canadian Born respondents found the Arts to be important in areas of Societal and Community Life

Non-Canadian born participants knew more artists than Canadian-born respondents, with 41.4% of immigrants knowing 5-9 artists compared to 12.8% of Canadian born who knew 5-9 professional artists. A large portion of non-Canadian born and Canadian-born respondents knew professional artists as personal friends or family members. Regarding the importance of the arts, there was a statistically significant difference between Canadian- and non-Canadian born respondents, with 71.6% of immigrants finding the arts very important to education, compared to 42.6% of Canadian-born individuals. Further, 63.7% of non-Canadian born participants found that the arts were very important to the economy, compared to 17.8% of Canadian-born participants. Of non-Canadian born participants, 57% found that the arts were very important for the economy, compared to 17.8% of Canadian-born participants. Amongst immigrant respondents, 57% felt that the arts were very important to business innovation, compared to 17.5% of Canadian-born participants.

Regarding aspects of the importance of the arts on the community, there was strong support from the non-Canadian born participants in community well-being for the importance of the arts (54.7%; compared with 29.8% of non-immigrants); community quality of life (60.4%; compared to Canadian-born with 29.2%); and importance on social connection (69.1%; compared with 20.7%). Although respondents born outside Canada reported strong importance of the arts, their actual involvement in the arts and frequency of engagement was lower for immigrants, with participation in the arts daily being 28% and participation weekly 48%. Further research should determine what barriers to involvement exist for this particular group, particularly considering the high importance given to the arts.

Overall Findings

Overall, the arts were viewed as generally more important for community and social life by women, lower-income individuals, non-Canadian born participants, Indigenous participants, and those with children under the age of 25. Older individuals more so than younger individuals placed the most importance on education and a sense of belonging, while younger individuals placed greater importance on community quality of life, social connection, and the economy. Finally, individuals from Regina placed the greatest importance of the arts while those from rural areas placed the least importance on the arts.

Comparison with the SPAR Research Findings

As another key study examining the arts ecology in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research (SPAR) provided key insights from their unique dual studies examining both the role

of artists and the role of the public in the arts ecology (SPAR, 2015a; 2015b). There were many similarities in findings between the current project and the SPAR research. Both projects found significant support for the arts in Saskatchewan. In both studies the public reported that the arts were very important to all levels of education, and also important for social cohesiveness. More broadly, the arts were viewed as important for a community's shared sense of well-being. This was also seen in the high level of arts participation in the province.

The SPAR project specifically examined the involvement of the public in arts activities as consumers, patrons, or audience members, or as donors of money and/or volunteer time. Regarding arts participation, the SPAR study found that 76% of respondents accessed live musical or theatre performances often or very often. This was similar to the current project, which more closely examined the personal involvement of the public in the arts. Whether through creating or participating as an audience member, a little over half of the respondents indicated involvement.

An important difference was found in respondents' connections with professional artists. In the SPAR study, the researchers found that two-thirds of respondents personally knew ten or more artists. In the current project, 12% of participants knew ten or more artists. One-third of respondents did not know any artists; for those that did know professional artists, the largest group knew two to four (28%). An interesting similarity between the studies is that those who did know artists often knew them as personal friends, neighbours, or family, thereby highlighting the close social connection between artists and community members. Another important factor is the importance of relationships between artists for the development of artists' careers and creative work. The SPAR project (Blackstone, Hage, & McWilliams, 2016) reported that artists found collaboration, networking, and informal connections very important to their advancement as an artist and for their creative and interpretive process.

Contribution to Areas of Arts Ecology

The current study makes several theoretical contributions to the overall understanding of the arts ecology in Saskatchewan. One important trend was that people frequently knew professional artists in their capacity as personal friends, family, or neighbours. As previously mentioned, this finding was echoed in the SPAR research project. Although the amount of people who knew artists is relatively small, the finding indicates personal connections to the arts community. The study also showed that parents were more likely to participate in the arts than those without children. More research is needed to clearly understand the nature of this connection and to elucidate participation barriers for those without children.

Limitations of Findings

One limitation of this study was the overrepresentation of women who were Canadian-born and of respondents aged fifty-five and over. However, in order to conduct quantitative analysis, the variables were weighted accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Throughout Saskatchewan, the arts continue to make an important contribution across multiple sectors, from education to the economy. This study has highlighted the public perception of the arts and artists within Saskatchewan. It is the first study in Saskatchewan to utilize a random sample for a representative picture of Saskatchewan residents' views. A little over half of the respondents reported some involvement in the arts, with a large majority of those reporting that when they do engage with the arts, it is on a daily basis.

This study is part of a broader and ongoing research effort to develop a clearer picture of the arts community and its role in Saskatchewan. The findings suggest significant public involvement in the arts throughout the province, making it an important aspect of daily life for many. People highlighted the importance of the arts for creating a sense of belonging in a community, for their community's sense of well-being, and for the community's quality of life. This suggests an important opportunity to expand the role of the arts in community development and revitalization. This study examined the connection between demographic characteristics and as indicators of involvement and perceptions of the arts' importance. One interesting finding was the high involvement of women and Canadian-born participants in the arts, in contrast to lower involvement of men and non-Canadian born participants. Despite lower participation levels, however, immigrant and Indigenous respondents tended to rate the importance of the arts much more highly than their Canadian-born and non-Indigenous counterparts. Further study is needed to identify if there are major barriers to participation by these groups, despite the high importance attributed to the arts by them.

The current study stands as the first part of a much larger research project using multiple research methods to understand the complex arts community within Saskatchewan. This report has focused on major quantitative trends in Saskatchewan community members' perceptions of the arts. The second half of this larger research project will aim to examine these trends at a deeper level to understand major facilitators and barriers faced by the arts community. The aim of this project is to examine the role of the arts in fostering community cohesion. Through arts involvement and networks with local artists, the arts community can work to integrate and promote cohesion. Another aim is to identify the social value of the arts in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has unique characteristics and values, which can be experienced and shared through works of art with the rest of Canada.

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