

At-risk elder artists in Canada

Excerpt of report “Senior Artists in Canada”

Prepared for the Senior Artists’ Research Project

By Kelly Hill



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Survey methodology

Hill Strategies prepared a detailed survey of senior artists that was widely circulated between September 16 and November 30, 2009. A total of 1,860 online and paper surveys were returned by artists and analyzed by Hill Strategies. Of these, 1,512 came from “professional” artists, as defined in the 1986 Canadian Artists’ Code. These 1,512 responses from professional artists, 4% of the 2006 Census estimate of all artists 55 years or older, formed the basis of the analysis. The data can be considered accurate within a maximum margin of error of 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Assessment of at-risk elder artists

Through the very detailed questionnaire, the Senior Artists’ Research Project was able to examine the number of elder artists who are “at risk” in five key areas: finances, health, housing, isolation and/or artistic career or legacy. This section groups the elder artists into three categories (high risk, moderate risk and low risk) in each of the five areas based on their responses to selected survey questions.

As in the rest of the report, 40,000 artists is used as an estimate of the total number of artists in Canada who are 55 years of age or older. This figure is in between the census count (35,900) and a larger figure based on an estimate of visual artists. The estimate of artists 65 and over is 15,000, which is roughly one-third of the 40,000 artists 55 and over.

Overall, this analysis shows that:

- 46% of artists 55 or over (about 18,000 people) are at high risk in at least one of the five key areas.
- 15% of all elder artists (about 6,000 people) are at high risk in more than one area.

The percentages are very similar for artists 65 or over:

- 47% are at high risk in at least one of the five key areas (7,000 artists).
- 13% are at high risk in more than one area (2,000 people).

The key findings in each area are:

Finances

- One-third of elder artists (32%, or almost 13,000 artists) are at a high financial risk.
- Another 29% of elder artists (almost 12,000 people) are at a moderate financial risk.
- Overall, 61% of elder artists, or about 24,000 people, are in some financial risk.
- 30% of artists 65 or over (4,500 people) are at a high financial risk.

Health

- 9% of elder artists (over 3,000 people) are at a high health risk.
- Another 65% of elder artists (26,000 people) are at a moderate health risk.
- Overall, 73% of elder artists, or about 29,000 people, are in some health risk.
- 10% of artists 65 or over (1,500 people) are at a high health risk.

Housing

- 10% of elder artists (nearly 4,000 people) are at a high housing risk.
- 9% of elder artists (also nearly 4,000 people) are at a moderate housing risk.
- Overall, 19% of elder artists, or nearly 8,000 people, are in some housing risk.
- 9% of artists 65 or over (almost 1,500 people) are at a high housing risk.

Isolation

- 6% of elder artists (over 2,000 people) are at a high risk of isolation.
- 22% of elder artists (nearly 9,000 people) are at a moderate isolation risk.
- Overall, 28% of elder artists, or over 11,000 people, are at some risk of isolation.
- 6% of artists 65 or over (almost 1,000 people) are at a high risk of isolation.

Artistic career and legacy

- 9% of elder artists (almost 4,000 people) are at a high risk in their artistic career or legacy.
- 33% of elder artists (about 13,000 people) have a moderate risk to their artistic career or legacy.
- Overall, 42% of elder artists, or almost 17,000 people, have some risk to their artistic career or legacy.
- 9% of artists 65 or over (4,500 people) are at a high risk in their artistic career or legacy.

Further details about the at-risk estimates are provided below.

Financial risk

Concerning their finances, the survey found that 61% of elder artists, or about 24,000 people, are in some financial risk. This includes the one-third of elder artists (32%, or almost 13,000 artists) who are at a high financial risk and the 29% of elder artists (almost 12,000 people) who are at a moderate financial risk.

The remaining 39% of elder artists, or about 15,000 people, are at a low financial risk.

Elder artists were identified as being in a “high financial risk” situation if:

- They had no income during the past year (2% of artists).
- They had household income of less than \$10,000 in the past year (7%).
- They have no savings or pension plan (14%).
- They do have a savings or pension plan, but its value is less than \$10,000 (8%).
- They are “very dissatisfied” with their finances (16%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in the bullet points add up to more than the 32% of artists who are in a high financial risk situation.

In a similar manner, elder artists were identified as being in a moderate financial risk situation if:

- They had household income between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in the past year (11%).
- They do have a savings or pension plan, but its value is greater than \$10,000 but less than \$100,000 (32%).
- They are quite dissatisfied with their finances, i.e., ranked their situation as a “2” or a “3” on a scale of 1 to 10 (16%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in these bullet points add up to more than the 29% of artists who are in a moderate financial risk situation. Also, some artists who meet a criterion for “moderate risk” might also meet a criterion for “high risk”, in which case they are included in the high risk group. This is why, for example, the percentage of artists with a savings or pension plan between \$10,000 and \$100,000 (32%) is higher than the overall percentage of elder artists considered to be in a moderate risk situation (29%).

Health risk

Regarding their health, the survey found that 73% of elder artists, or about 29,000 people, are in some health risk. This includes the 9% of elder artists (over 3,000 people) who are at a high health risk and the 65% of elder artists (26,000 people) who are at a moderate health risk.

The remaining 27% of elder artists, or about 11,000 people, are at a low health risk.

Elder artists were identified as being in a “high health risk” situation if:

- A physical or mental condition or another health problem often reduces the amount or the kind of arts activities that they can do (8%).
- They are “very dissatisfied” with their health (3%).

Because some artists are in both of the above situations, the percentages in the bullet points add up to more than the 9% of artists who are in a high health risk situation.

In a similar manner, elder artists were identified as being in a moderate health risk situation if:

- They have a health problem (41%).
- A physical or mental condition or another health problem sometimes reduces the amount or the kind of arts activities that they can do (31%).
- They do not have extended health care coverage (38%).
- They indicated that their potential needs from the Senior Artists’ Research Project are highest in the area of health (12%).
- They are quite dissatisfied with their health, i.e., ranked their situation as a “2” or a “3” on a scale of 1 to 10 (6%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in these bullet points add up to more than the 65% of artists who are in a moderate health risk situation. Also, some artists who meet a criterion for “moderate risk” might also meet a criterion for “high risk”, in which case they are included in the high risk group.

Housing risk

Regarding artists’ housing situation, the survey found that 19% of elder artists, or nearly 8,000 people, are in some housing risk. This includes the 10% of elder artists (nearly 4,000 people) who are at a high housing risk and the 9% of elder artists (also nearly 4,000 people) who are at a moderate housing risk.

The remaining 81% of elder artists, or about 32,000 people, are at a low housing risk.

Elder artists were identified as being in a “high housing risk” situation if:

- They have a household income below \$30,000 and spend at least 32% of their household income on rent or mortgage (i.e., \$800 or more). (8% of elder artists)
- They did not have enough food in the household in the past 12 months (2%).
- They were evicted for non-payment of rent (0.1%).
- They had their heating or electricity disconnected in the past 12 months (0.2%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in the bullet points add up to more than the 10% of artists who are in a high risk housing situation.

In a similar manner, elder artists were identified as being in a moderate housing risk situation if:

- They have a household income below \$30,000 and spend between 24% and 32% of their household income on rent or mortgage (i.e., \$600 to \$799). (4% of elder artists)
- They did not pay their full heating, electricity or telephone bill in the past 12 months (4%).
- They did not pay their full rent or mortgage in the past 12 months (3%).
- They had their telephone disconnected in the past 12 months (1%).
- They indicated that their potential needs from the Senior Artists' Research Project are highest in the area of housing (7%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in these bullet points add up to more than the 9% of artists who are in a moderate housing risk situation. Also, some artists who meet a criterion for "moderate risk" might also meet a criterion for "high risk", in which case they are included in the high risk group.

Isolation risk

Isolation is more challenging to assess than other areas, because of the strong personal and psychological elements involved in personal connections or, conversely, isolation. Despite this challenge, the researchers were able to examine some important elements of potential isolation and develop estimates of elder artists who are at risk of isolation.

Note: This section focuses more on professional isolation than on personal isolation. The estimates in this section are probably fairly conservative. That is, there are probably more elder artists at risk of isolation than could be ascertained from the senior artists' survey.

The survey found that 28% of elder artists, or over 11,000 people, are at some risk of isolation. This includes the 6% of elder artists (over 2,000 people) who are at a high risk of isolation and the 22% of elder artists (nearly 9,000 people) who are at a moderate isolation risk.

The remaining 72% of elder artists, or almost 29,000 people, are at a lower risk of isolation.

Elder artists were identified as being at a "high risk of isolation" if:

- They typically communicate less than annually with their professional colleagues. (3% of elder artists)
- They typically communicate less than annually with their friends who are artists (2%).
- They typically communicate less than annually with their friends who are not artists (0.4%).
- They have felt "not at all" appreciated by other artists during their artistic career (1%).
- They are very dissatisfied with their life as a whole right now (2%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in the bullet points add up to more than the 6% of artists who are in a high risk situation.

In a similar manner, elder artists were identified as being at a moderate risk of isolation if:

- They typically communicate only annually with their professional colleagues. (9% of elder artists)
- They typically communicate only annually with their friends who are artists (5%).
- They typically communicate only annually with their friends who are not artists (3%).
- They have felt “not very” appreciated by other artists during their artistic career (9%).
- They indicated that their potential needs from the Senior Artists’ Research Project are highest in the area of “social networks / communications / connections with other artists” (8%).
- They are quite dissatisfied with their life as a whole right now, i.e., ranked their situation as a “2” or a “3” on a scale of 1 to 10 (4%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in these bullet points add up to more than the 22% of artists who are at a moderate risk of isolation. Also, some artists who meet a criterion for “moderate risk” might also meet a criterion for “high risk”, in which case they are included in the high risk group.

Artistic career and legacy

The survey found that 42% of elder artists, or almost 17,000 people, have some risk to their artistic career or legacy. This includes the 9% of elder artists (almost 4,000 people) who are at a high risk in their artistic career or legacy and the 33% of elder artists (about 13,000 people) who are at a moderate risk in their artistic career or legacy.

The remaining 58% of elder artists, or about 23,000 people, are at a lower risk in their artistic career or legacy.

Elder artists were identified as being at a high risk in their artistic career or legacy if:

- They are currently very dissatisfied with their principal arts activity or occupation (6% of elder artists).
- They are very dissatisfied with their overall artistic career to date (2%).
- They would “probably not” or “definitely not” choose an artistic career again, if they had the chance to live their life over again (4%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in the bullet points add up to more than the 9% of artists who are in a high risk situation.

In a similar manner, elder artists were identified as being at a moderate risk in their artistic career or legacy if:

- They do not have a will (21% of elder artists).
- They own copyright in works of art (or residuals or royalties) but have made no arrangements for their works after their death (23% of all elder artists).
- They are currently quite dissatisfied with their principal arts activity or occupation, i.e., ranked their situation as a “2” or a “3” on a scale of 1 to 10 (8%).
- They are quite dissatisfied with their overall artistic career to date, i.e., ranked their situation as a “2” or a “3” on a scale of 1 to 10 (6%).

Because some artists are in more than one of the above situations, the percentages in these bullet points add up to more than the 33% of artists who are at a moderate risk in their artistic career or legacy. Also, some artists who meet a criterion for “moderate risk” might also meet a criterion for “high risk”, in which case they are included in the high risk group.