

# Wood Buffalo's Arts Community Viewed from Within and Without

Final report of two major research projects  
conducted for Arts Council Wood Buffalo



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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report contains an analysis of two important surveys conducted for the Arts Council Wood Buffalo in 2015 and 2016. The first section examines the Wood Buffalo public's arts activities and perceptions, while the second section provides an analysis of a survey of Wood Buffalo artists, arts workers, and arts organizations.

## Table of Contents

<b>Do Wood Buffalo residents value the arts, culture and heritage? (i.e., the view from without).....</b>	<b>1</b>
Survey of local residents conducted in March 2016.....	1
Strong recognition of the importance of the arts for quality of life.....	2
Favourable perceptions of artists and local support for the arts.....	3
Recognition of specific facilities' contribution to quality of life.....	4
Many Wood Buffalo residents strongly agree with benefits of arts and culture.....	5
Arts and culture attendance is below national averages (likely due to lack of opportunities to participate).....	6
Substantial attendance at arts and culture activities from Aboriginal cultures and traditions.....	12
Personal involvement in the arts: Wood Buffalo residents similar to other Canadians.....	13
Children's arts and culture participation.....	14
<b>The view from within: Results of a survey of Wood Buffalo's arts community.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Survey of artists, arts workers, and arts organizations in late 2015.....	17
Artists.....	18
Key findings regarding individual arts workers.....	36
Key findings regarding arts businesses and organizations.....	39

# Do Wood Buffalo residents value the arts, culture and heritage? (i.e., the view from without)

## *Survey of local residents conducted in March 2016*

The traumatic wildfire that swept through Wood Buffalo has led to a determined recovery effort and will require a rebuilding of parts of Fort McMurray and surrounding communities. As part of the recovery, a key question has been posed: "What do Wood Buffalo residents value about their communities?"

This report examines one facet of the kind of communities desired by Wood Buffalo residents, namely, whether Fort McMurray and area residents believe that the arts, culture and heritage are an integral part of their community.

A telephone survey of 407 local residents was completed in March of 2016, about six weeks before the wildfire forced the evacuation of Fort McMurray and area residents. The survey results are a statistically representative sample of residents of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, with a maximum margin of error of 5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The telephone survey was conducted by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.

Rural residents were slightly oversampled, and the responses include 40 residents of rural areas of Wood Buffalo. This report includes a few key indicators of the arts and culture activities of rural Wood Buffalo residents.

Residents of project accommodations ("work camps") were not included in the survey sample.

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## KEY FINDINGS OF THE PUBLIC SURVEY

**1) Wood Buffalo residents value their cultural events and spaces (as well as local artists), but would like to see more opportunities for participation in the arts, culture, and heritage.**

**2) There are more Wood Buffalo families with at least one child involved in creative arts activities (90%) than families with a child who plays sports (85%).**

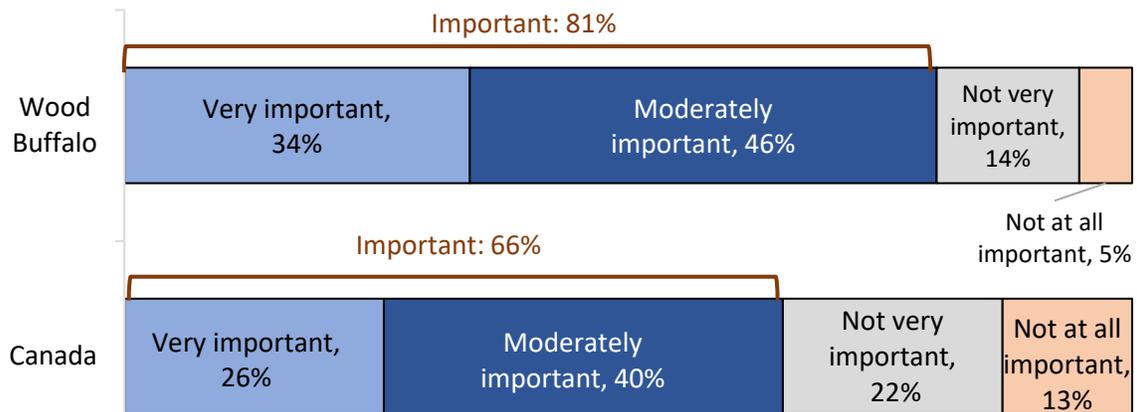
**3) Wood Buffalo residents, whether or not they have children, have a strong recognition of the importance of arts and culture activities for children and families.**

## Strong recognition of the importance of the arts for quality of life

The results of the telephone survey show that Wood Buffalo residents recognize the importance of the arts and culture for their quality of life. When asked “How important to you are arts and cultural events in terms of the quality of life of you and your family?”, Wood Buffalo residents are much more likely to say that arts and culture events are either very or moderately important (81% vs 66%), including a higher proportion who say that these events are very important (34% vs. 26%). These findings are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: “How important to you are arts and cultural events in terms of the quality of life of you and your family?”

### Wood Buffalo residents rank importance of arts and cultural events for "quality of life of you and your family" more highly than other Canadians



Sources: Arts Council Wood Buffalo telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadian residents (2012)

## Favourable perceptions of artists and local support for the arts

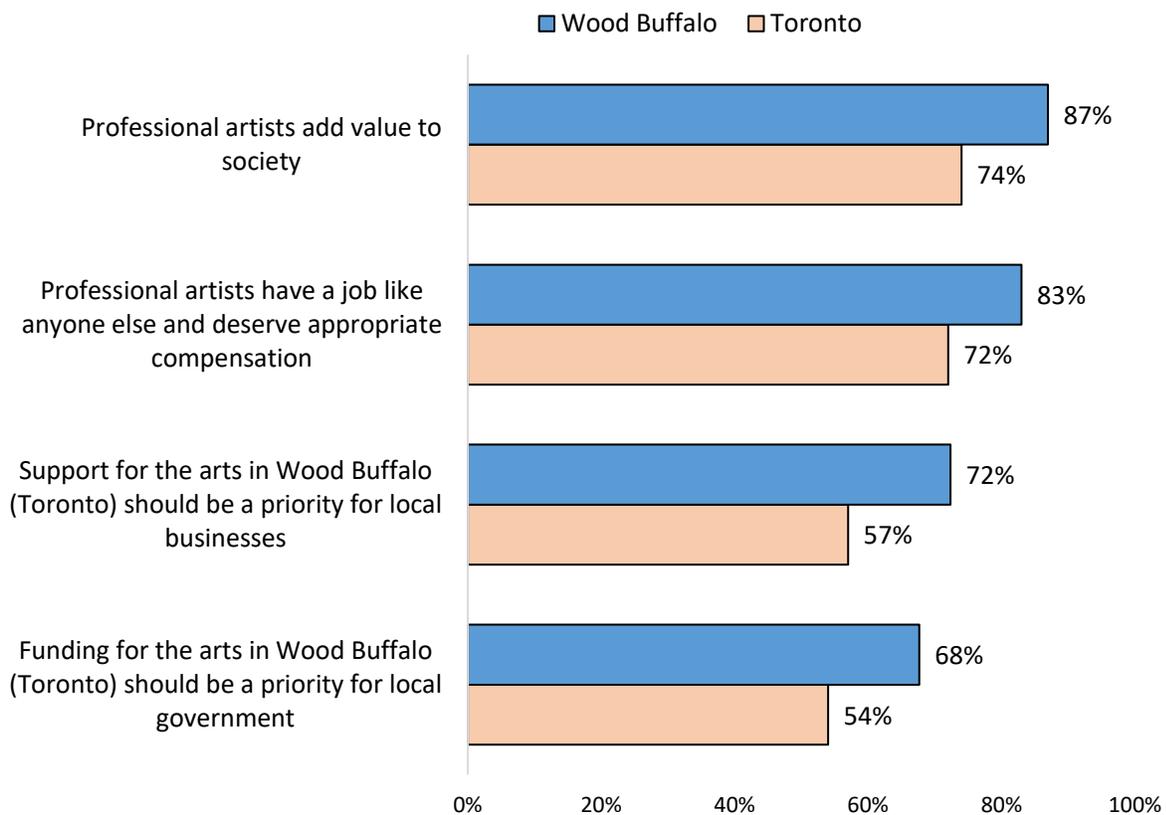
Wood Buffalo residents are more supportive of the arts than Toronto residents when it comes to recognition of professional artists and local support for the arts. Figure 2 shows that Wood Buffalo residents are more likely than Torontonians to agree that:

- Professional artists add value to society
- Professional artists have a job like anyone else and deserve appropriate compensation
- Support for the arts in Wood Buffalo (Toronto) should be a priority for local businesses
- Support for the arts in Wood Buffalo (Toronto) should be a priority for local government

(This question was not asked in a national survey but is benchmarked to a Toronto-specific survey.)

Figure 2: “I’m going to ask you how much you agree with a few more statements. Again, the response options are strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.”

### Wood Buffalo residents are generally more supportive of the arts than Torontonians (Percentage of residents who agree with statements about local arts and artists)



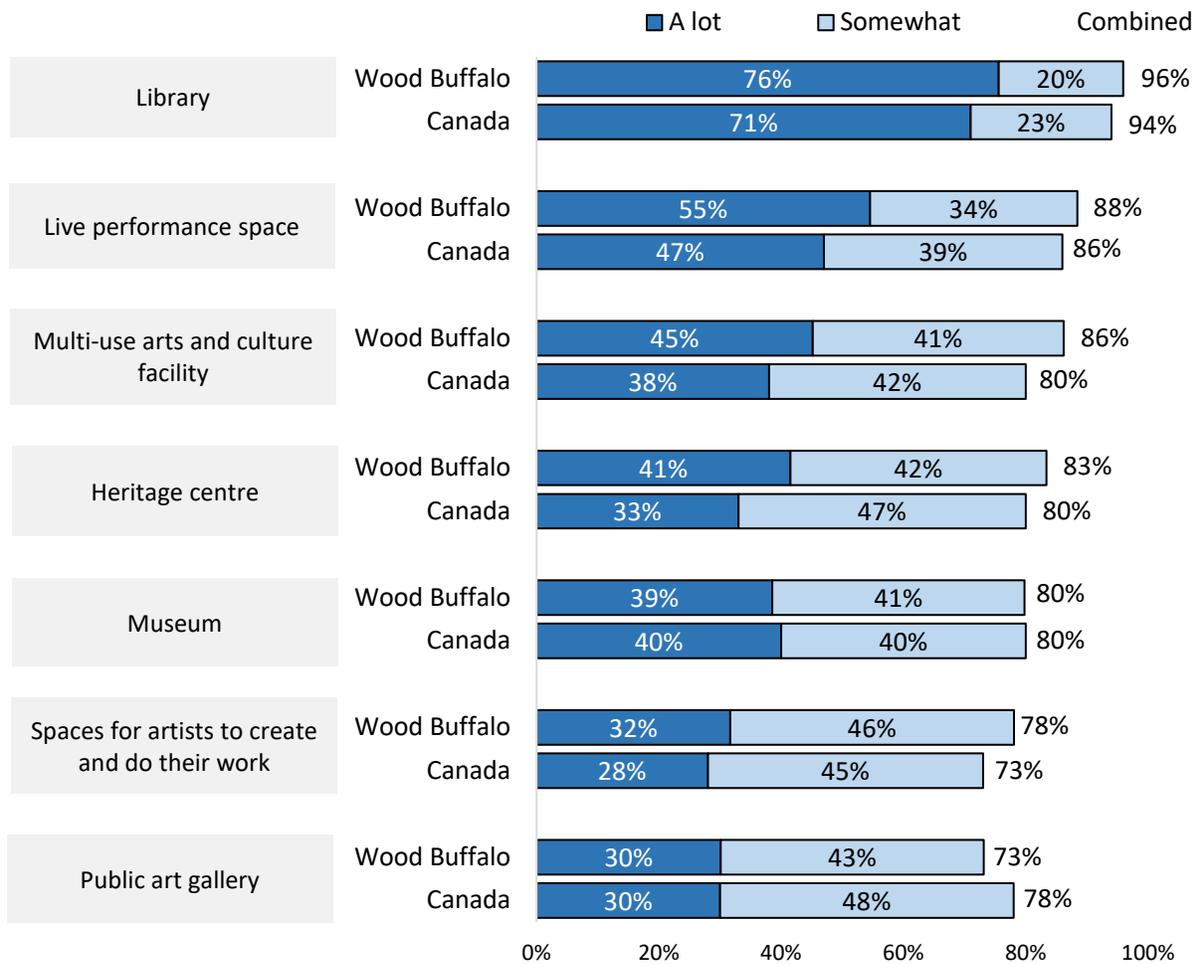
Sources: Arts Council Wood Buffalo telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Toronto Arts Stats 2016 (based on a Léger survey of 500 Toronto residents)

## Recognition of specific facilities' contribution to quality of life

Residents' perceptions of the contribution of specific arts and cultural facilities to local quality of life are generally similar between Wood Buffalo residents and other Canadians, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: "How much do you think the following facilities contribute to the quality of life of people in your community? How about [facility]? Do you think this contributes a lot, somewhat, not much, or not at all to the quality of life of people in your community?"

### Percentage of residents who believe that specific arts and cultural facilities are important to local quality of life: Wood Buffalo residents similar to other Canadians



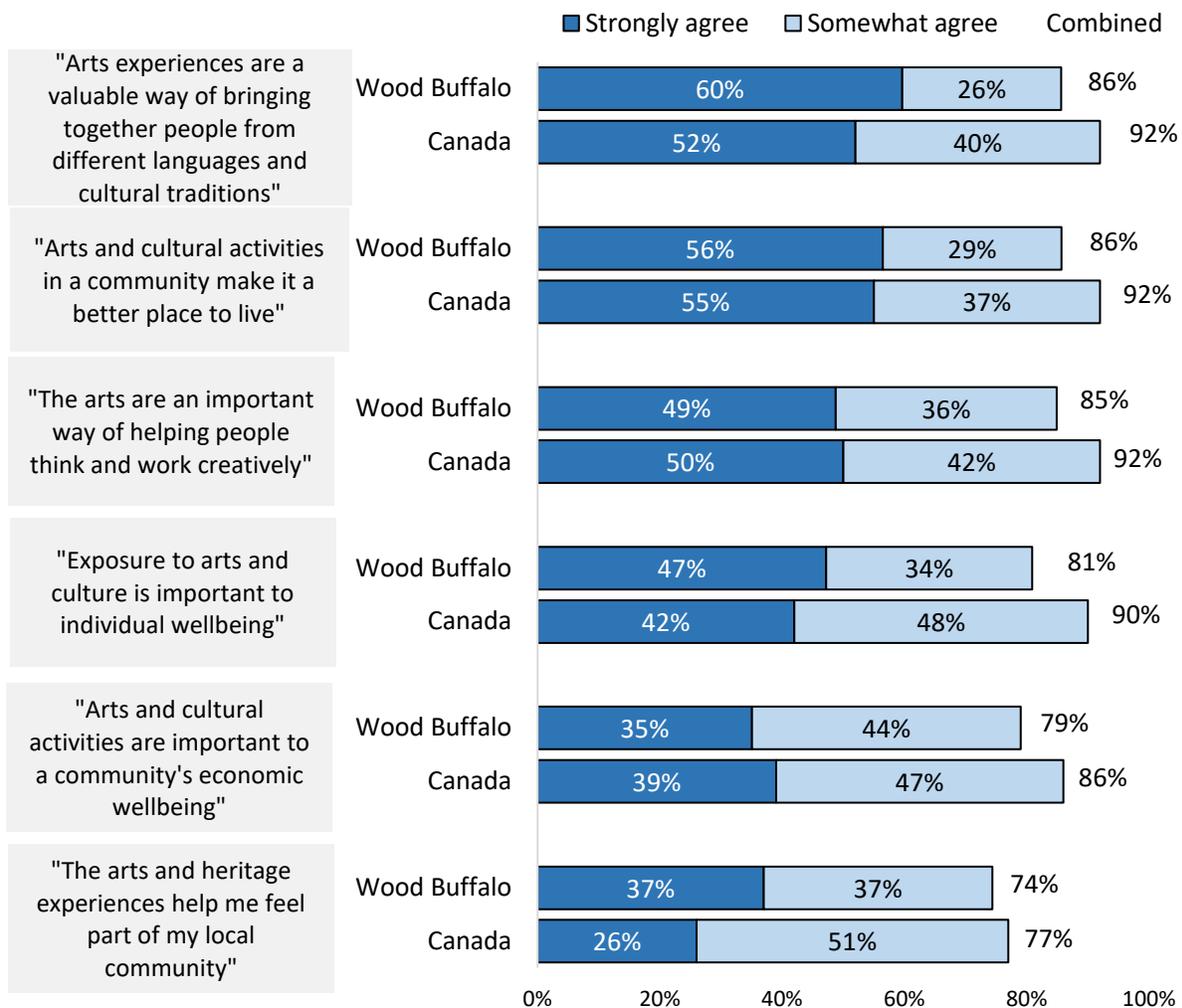
Sources: Arts Council Wood Buffalo telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadian residents (2012)

## Many Wood Buffalo residents strongly agree with benefits of arts and culture

As shown in Figure 4, the percentage of Wood Buffalo residents who strongly agree with statements about the benefits of the arts and culture is equal to or higher than the percentage of other Canadians. However, when the strongly and somewhat agree categories are combined, slightly fewer Wood Buffalo residents than other Canadians agree with many of the statements.

Figure 4: "Please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements. How about...?"

### Percentage of residents who agree with statements about the benefits of the arts and culture: Wood Buffalo residents compared with Canadian averages



Sources: Arts Council Wood Buffalo telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadian residents (2012)

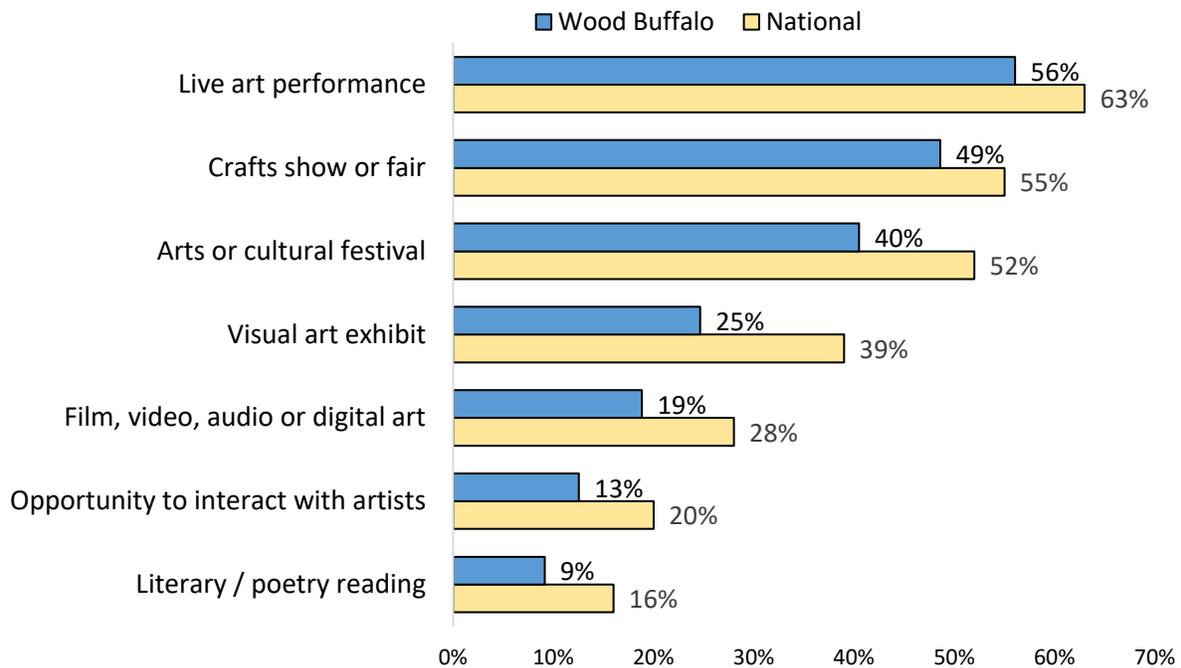
## Arts and culture attendance is below national averages (likely due to lack of opportunities to participate)

For each of seven arts attendance activities in the Wood Buffalo and national surveys, Wood Buffalo residents are somewhat less likely to have attended during the past year (see Figure 5). While a number of the differences are within 6 or 7 percentage points, other differences are larger, including festivals, visual arts and media arts.

Overall, 90% of Wood Buffalo residents attended at least one of these arts and culture activities in the past year. The overall arts and culture attendance rate was similar between the 40 rural respondents and residents of urban portions of Wood Buffalo (89% vs. 90%).

Figure 5: “I’m going to read a list of different types of live performances and arts activities. Please tell me whether you attended each type in the last 12 months”

### Live performances and arts activities: Wood Buffalo residents compared with Canadian averages



Sources: ACWB telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadians (2012)

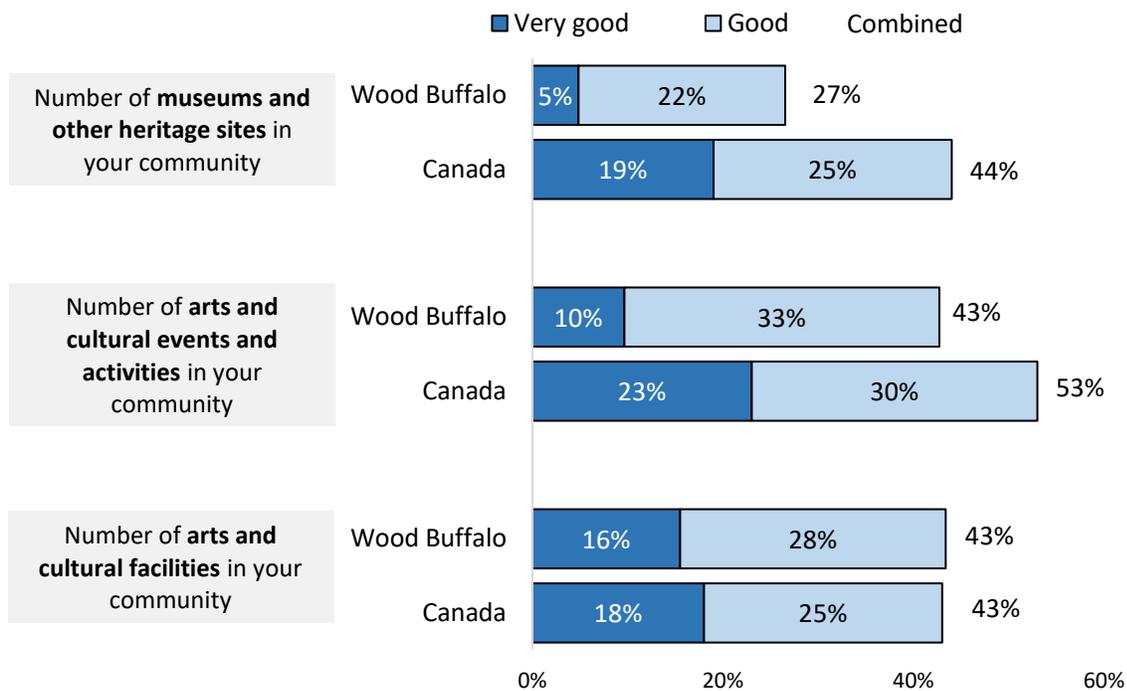
It is likely that access to local arts opportunities is lower for Wood Buffalo residents than many other Canadians, which may be a factor in the differences observed above. In fact, ratings provided by Wood Buffalo residents show that the number of arts or culture events and museums or heritage sites appears to be lacking compared with national averages. Figure 6 shows that Wood Buffalo residents are much less likely than other Canadians to believe that:

- The number of local arts and culture events is very good (dark blue shading) or good (light blue).
- The number of local museums and other heritage sites is very good or good.
- In both of these cases, the differences in “very good” responses are particularly large.

On the other hand, the number of arts and cultural facilities was rated similarly in Wood Buffalo as in the rest of Canada.

Figure 6: “Thinking about Wood Buffalo, how would you rate each of the following? Please use a scale from 1-5, where ‘1’ means very poor, ‘5’ means very good, and ‘3’ means neither. If something does not apply, please say so. How about the...?”

### Wood Buffalo residents want more arts, culture and heritage (Ratings of the number of events and facilities, Wood Buffalo residents compared with Canadian averages)

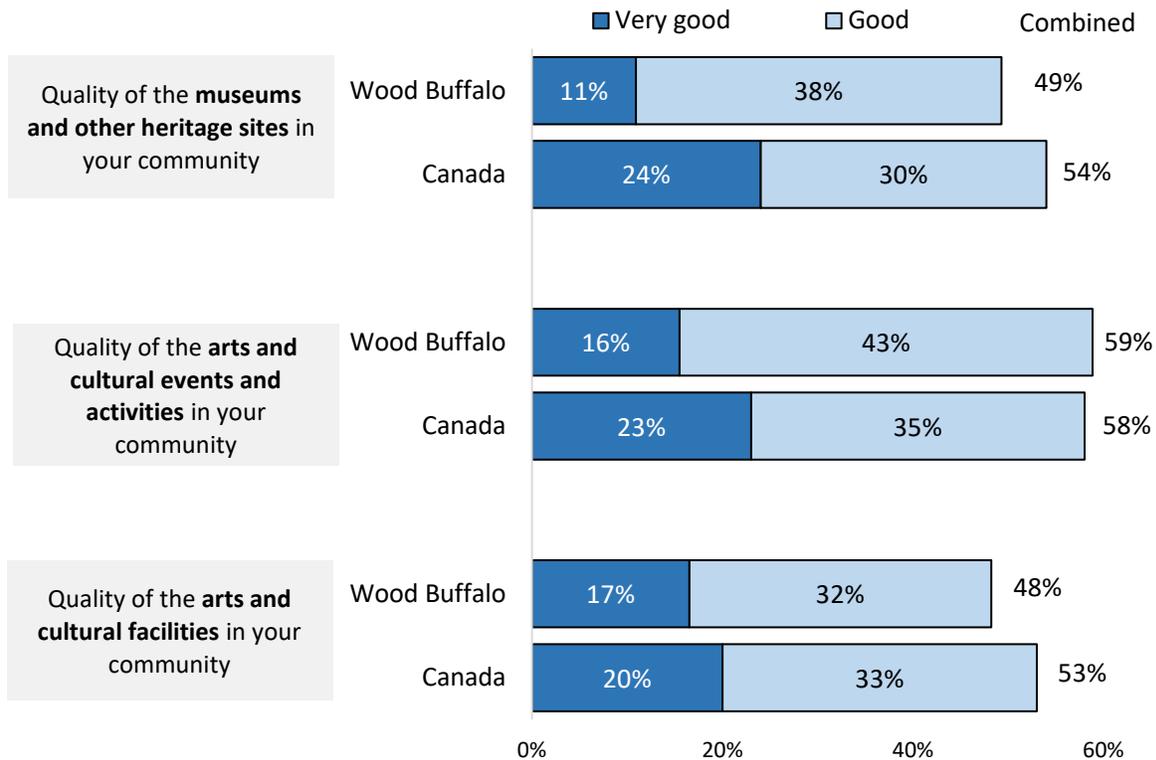


Sources: Arts Council Wood Buffalo telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadian residents (2012)

Regarding the quality of local arts, culture and heritage activities and facilities, Wood Buffalo residents provided ratings that are similar to those of other Canadians (within five percentage points), as shown in Figure 7. However, the proportion of Wood Buffalo residents perceiving the quality of arts, culture and heritage to be “very good” (as opposed to just “good”) is lower than the national averages.

Figure 7: “Thinking about Wood Buffalo, how would you rate each of the following? Please use a scale from 1-5, where ‘1’ means very poor, ‘5’ means very good, and ‘3’ means neither. If something does not apply, please say so. How about...?”

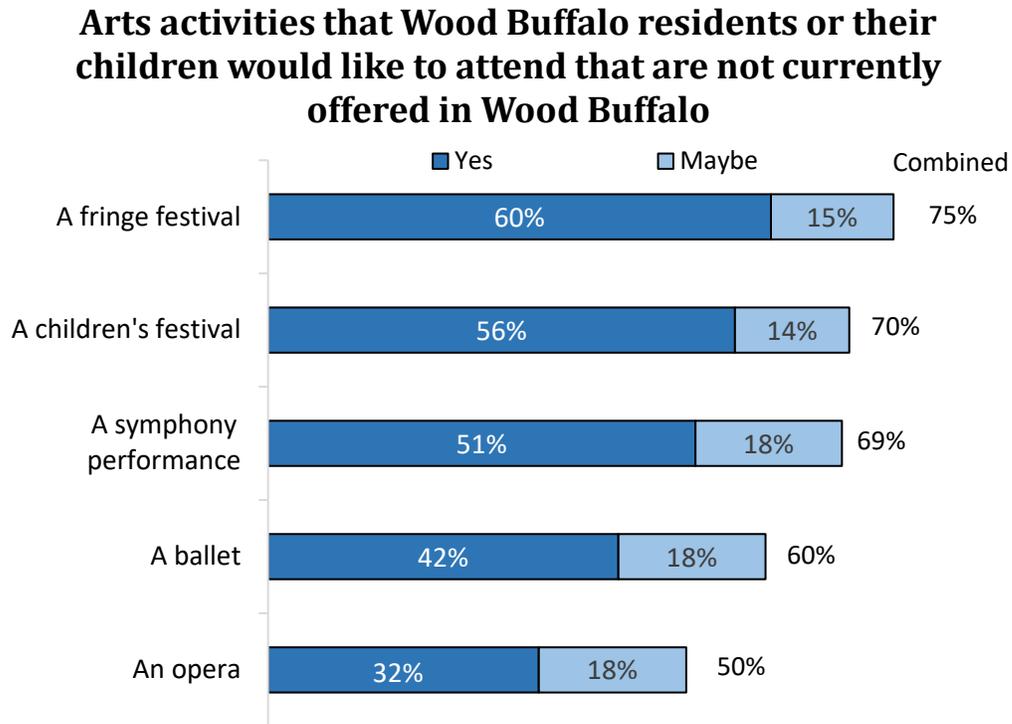
### Perceptions of the quality of arts, culture and heritage are similar in Wood Buffalo and rest of Canada



Sources: Arts Council Wood Buffalo telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadian residents (2012)

A separate survey question provides another indicator of the desire for more local arts and culture opportunities. When asked about their interest in additional arts and culture activities, a majority of Wood Buffalo residents indicated that they would consider attending each one of the response options (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: “Now I’d like you to think about any cultural performances, events, or exhibits that you or your children would like to attend that are not currently offered in Wood Buffalo. Would you like to attend...”

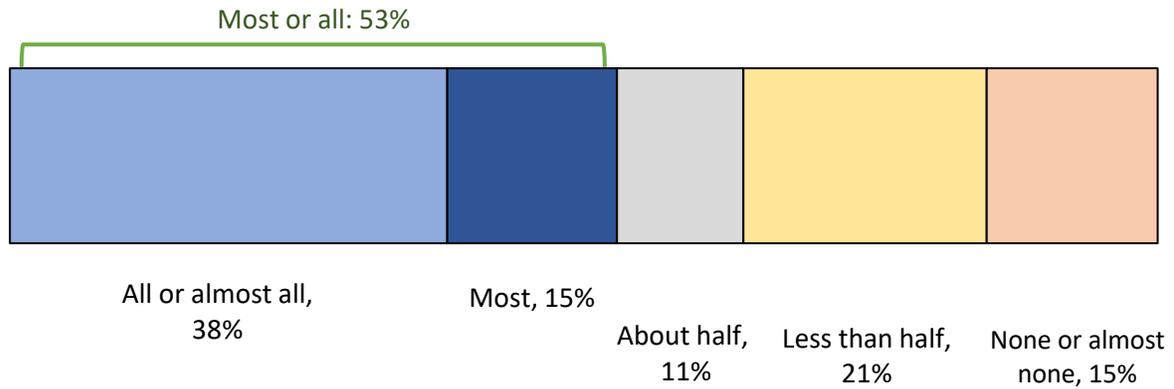


*Based on a telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents in March 2016.*

Wood Buffalo residents were also asked to estimate what proportion of their recent arts and culture attendance was done locally. Figure 9 indicates that 53% of Wood Buffalo and culture attendees primarily visit local cultural events. On the other hand, 15% of Wood Buffalo residents who attended something in the past year did not do so locally.

Figure 9: "Could you estimate the proportion of the cultural performances, events, or exhibits you attended in the last 12 months that took place locally in Wood Buffalo? Would you say that it is..."

### Estimated percentage of arts and culture attendance that is local (i.e., in Wood Buffalo)

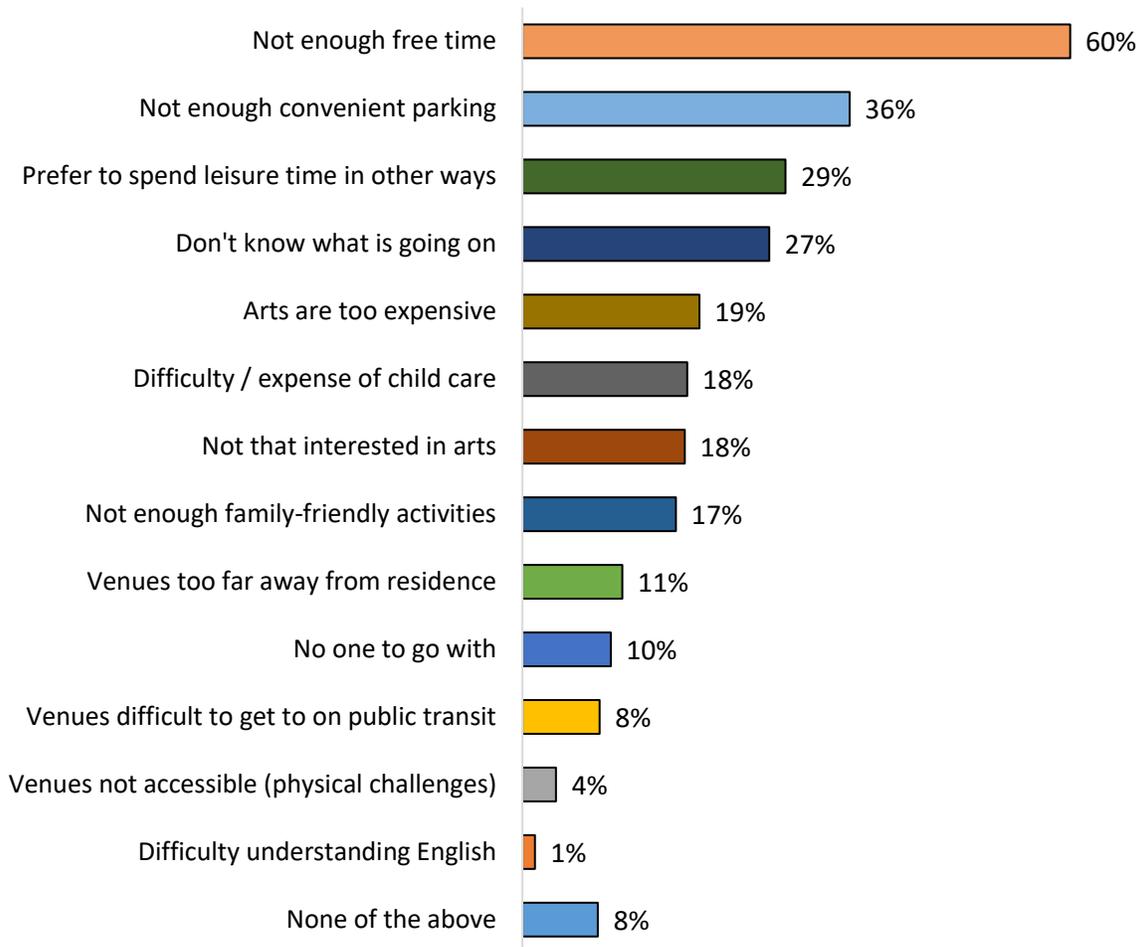


Based on a telephone survey of 362 Wood Buffalo residents in April 2016 who had attended at least one activity in the past year

The survey included a series of questions about possible barriers to arts and culture attendance. Figure 10 shows that a lack of free time was by far the most common barrier.

Figure 10: "In general, are there any factors that make it difficult for you to attend cultural events or participate in arts activities in Wood Buffalo? Please indicate which, if any, of the following barriers apply to your situation."

### Factors making it difficult to attend cultural events: Wood Buffalo residents

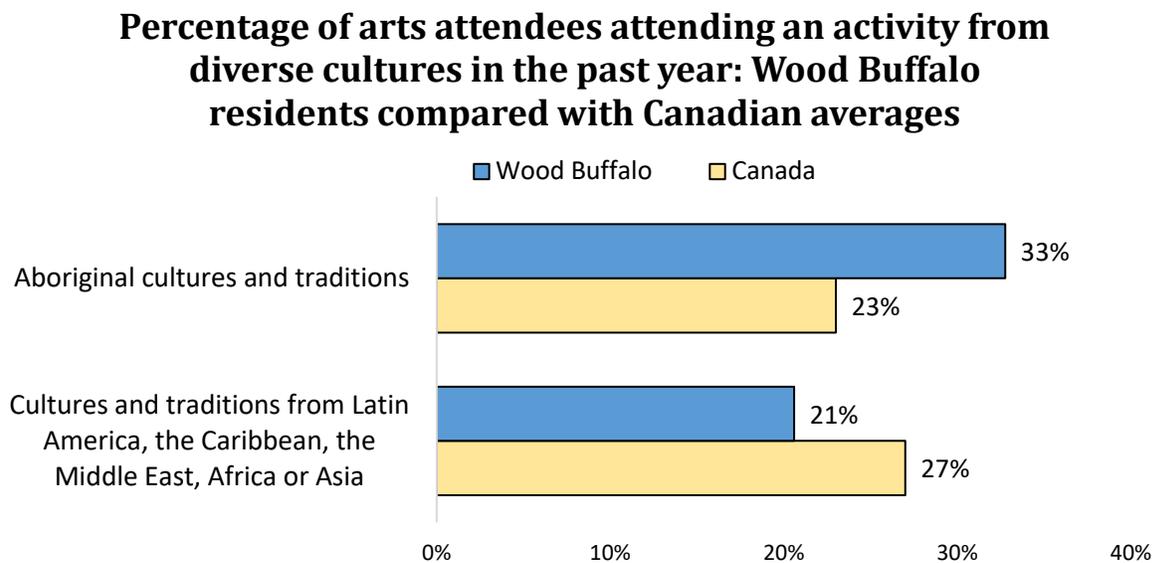


Based on a telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents in March 2016

## Substantial attendance at arts and culture activities from Aboriginal cultures and traditions

Among respondents who had attended at least one arts and culture activity, Wood Buffalo residents were much more likely than other Canadians to have attended an activity based on Aboriginal cultures and traditions (33%, compared with 23% of all Canadians). On the other hand, Wood Buffalo residents were somewhat less likely to have attended an activity based on cultures and traditions from Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa or Asia (21%, compared with 27% of all Canadians). Figure 11 charts these numbers.

Figure 11: "Thinking of the performances, events, or exhibits you attended in the last 12 months, were any of them based on...?"



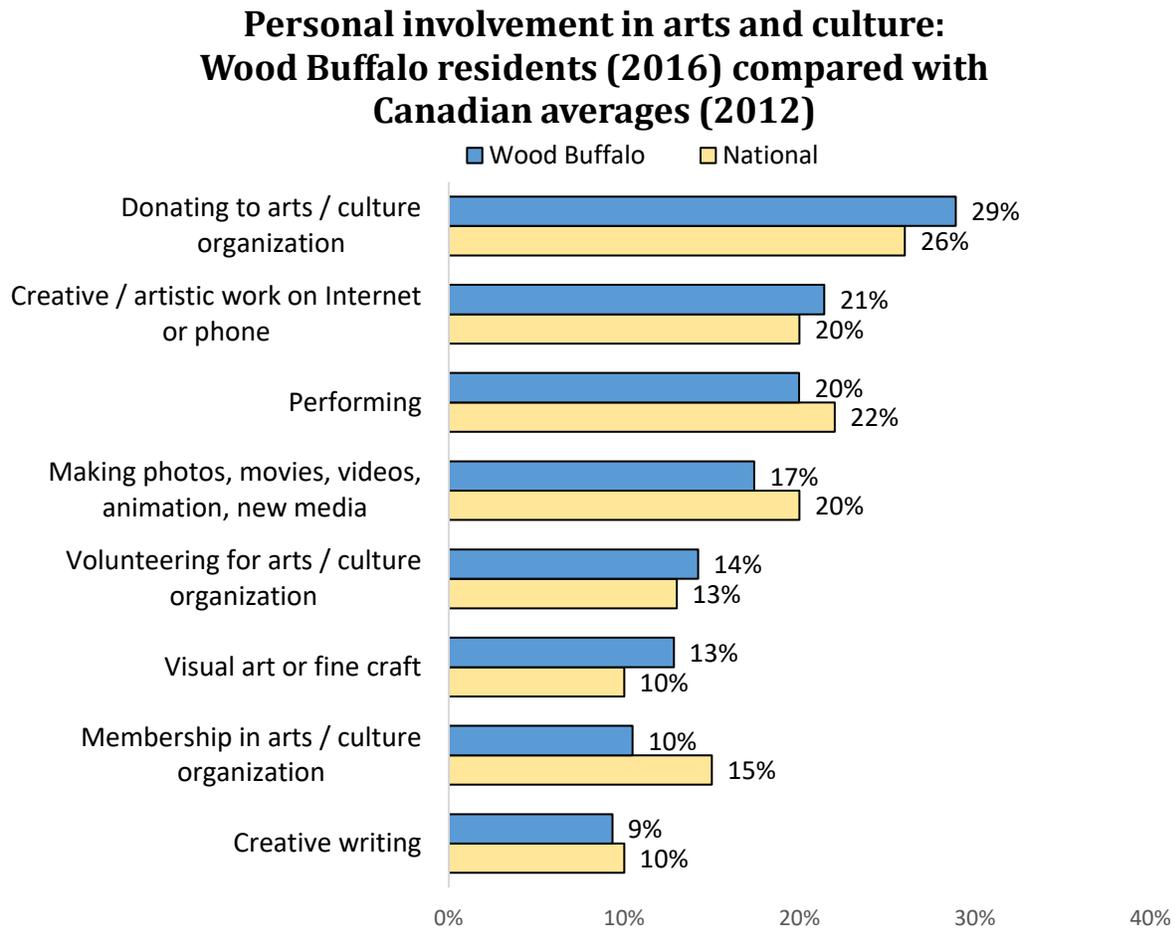
Sources: Arts Council Wood Buffalo telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents (March 2016) and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadian residents (2012)

## Personal involvement in the arts: Wood Buffalo residents similar to other Canadians

Figure 12 shows that Wood Buffalo residents have similar participation rates as other Canadians for all eight components of an arts involvement question that was asked in both the Wood Buffalo and national surveys. All of the differences are within five percentage points (and therefore not statistically significant). In four cases, Wood Buffalo residents have a slightly higher participation rate than other Canadians (but within the margin of error). In the other four cases, the participation rate is slightly lower among Wood Buffalo residents (but within the margin of error).

Overall, 65% of Wood Buffalo residents were personally involved in at least one of these arts and culture activities in the past year. Personal involvement was more common among the 40 rural respondents than among residents of urban portions of Wood Buffalo (75% vs. 64%).

Figure 12: "In the last 12 months, have you personally been involved in any of the following...?"



Sources: ACWB telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents in March 2016 and Canadian Heritage survey of 1,001 Canadians (2012)

## *Children's arts and culture participation*

Respondents with at least one child at home (three years of age or older) were asked whether their any of their children participate in eight different arts activities and events. They were also asked whether they have a child who plays sports.

Of respondents with children three or older, 97% have at least one child who participates in at least one of the arts activities.

The eight arts activities and events can be separated into two broad categories: 1) creative arts activities (including dancing, playing music or singing, acting in a performance, making arts or crafts, and making videos or movies); and 2) more passive arts attendance (attending concerts or other musical events, going to museums or art galleries, and going to heritage sites).

There are more Wood Buffalo families with at least one child involved in creative arts activities (90%) than families with a child who plays sports (85%).

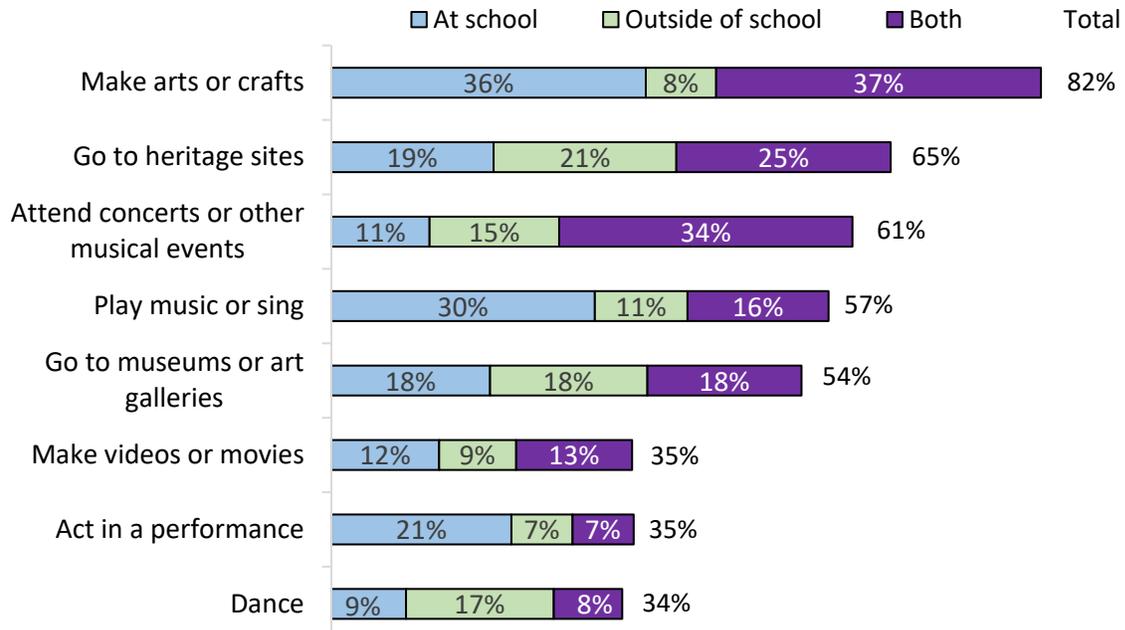
Regarding arts attendance, 80% of Wood Buffalo families have at least one child who attends arts, culture, or heritage events.

Each of these three key percentages is quite high. In other words, the survey results clearly show that many children in Wood Buffalo participate in all of the above activities: creative arts, playing sports, and arts attendance.

Figure 13 provides full details of the proportion of families with at least one child participating in the eight arts activities at school and/or outside of school.

Figure 13: "Does any child of yours (at least 3 years of age) take part in the following activities at school, outside of school, or both ..."

### Children's arts activities in Wood Buffalo families that have at least one child 3 years of age or older

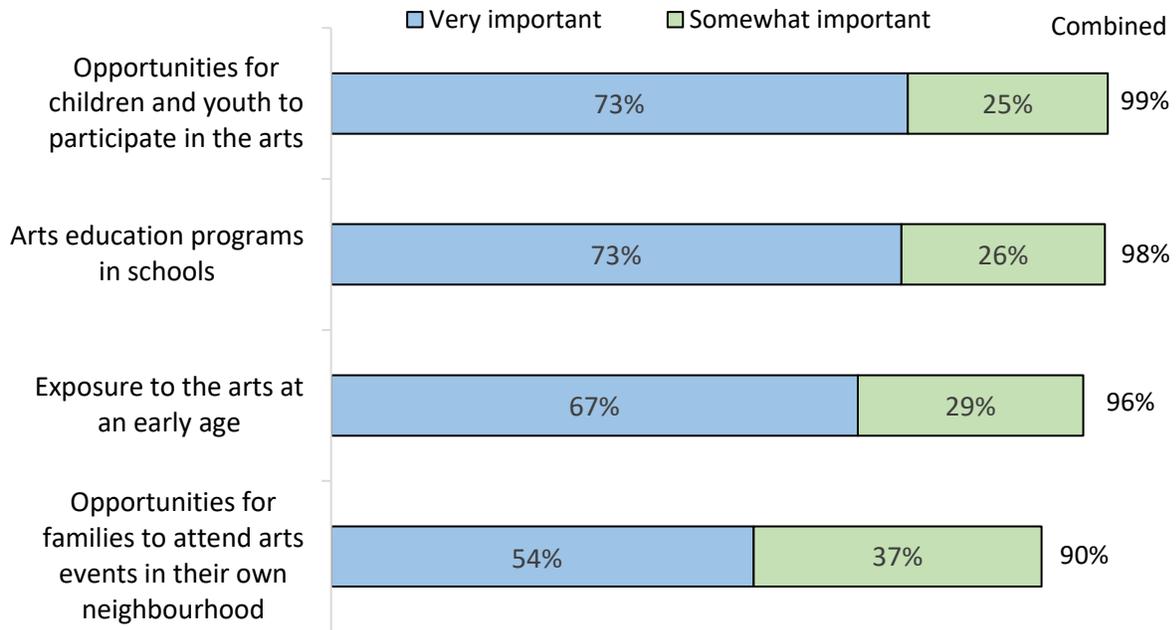


Based on a telephone survey of 170 Wood Buffalo residents in April 2016 with a child 3 years of age or older.

Wood Buffalo residents, whether or not they have children, have a strong recognition of the importance of arts and culture activities for children and families, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: "Whether or not you have a child living with you, how important do you think the following children and family activities are for a community?"

### Wood Buffalo residents' perceptions of the importance of children and family activities for the community



Based on a telephone survey of 407 Wood Buffalo residents in March 2016.

# The view from within: Results of a survey of Wood Buffalo's arts community

## *Survey of artists, arts workers, and arts organizations in late 2015*

In November and December of 2015, Arts Council Wood Buffalo surveyed artists, arts workers, and arts organizations regarding their situations, needs, successes, and challenges. The local arts community and non-residents who did artistic work in the area over the past three years were asked about their arts work, income, and personal or organizational situations. In conjunction with ACWB, Hill Strategies Research developed, conducted, and analyzed the survey.

The Wood Buffalo arts community responded in a major way. The survey, which was available between November 4 and December 4, 2015 at [www.ArtsSurveyWB.ca](http://www.ArtsSurveyWB.ca), received a total of 178 usable responses, which was close to double the original goal of 100 responses. Clearly, local artists, arts organizations, and arts-related businesses felt a desire to share the nature of their situations.

In original discussions between Arts Council Wood Buffalo and Hill Strategies Research, it was estimated that there might be a total population of 250 local artists and arts organizations / businesses that might possibly respond to the survey. As such, 178 responses represent a major proportion of potential respondents (71%). Such a large number of survey responses increases confidence in the survey results. However, as with all online surveys where individuals self-select whether to respond (rather than being chosen at random), there remains some uncertainty as to whether the responses could provide a statistically representative sample of the local arts community. (If the sample *was* randomized, 178 responses from a total population of 250 would represent a maximum margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.)

The survey had three main sections:

1. Artists OR Arts educators or teachers (130 usable responses)
2. Independent arts workers OR Non-senior staff member of an arts organization or business (26 usable responses)
3. Senior staff members of not-for-profit arts organizations OR Board Chairs / Presidents of not-for-profit arts organizations OR Owners or senior staff members of arts-related businesses (22 usable responses).

Because of the relatively small number of arts worker and organizational respondents (i.e., the second and third sections of the survey) and the fact that there were known gaps in the organizational respondents, only brief highlights of those sections are presented in this report.

## Artists

This section of the report presents data on 130 artists who responded to the ACWB survey. While most statistics are based on all responding artists, data related to the working lives of artists are often broken out into self-identified “professional” artists (57 of the 130 respondents, or 44%) and artists who did not identify themselves as professional (the other 73 respondents, or 56% of all 130).

Because almost all of the surveyed artists reside in Wood Buffalo at least part-time (123 of 130, or 95%), separate statistics for resident artists are not presented in this report. These statistics are very similar to those for all 130 responding artists. Five of the seven non-resident artists who completed the survey reside in Alberta (Edmonton, Calgary, Canmore, Athabasca, and Vulcan), while the other two reside in Toronto and Vancouver. All did artistic work in Wood Buffalo during the past three years.

### KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY OF ARTISTS

- 130 respondents indicated that they have done artistic work in Wood Buffalo over the past three years.
- Of the 130 respondents, 123 are Wood Buffalo residents (at least part time).
- Artists are very active in Wood Buffalo, especially teaching.
- Many artists work primarily in visual arts, music, and theatre.
- 44% of responding artists consider themselves to be “professional”, that is, at various stages of building a career in the arts.
- Two-thirds of Wood Buffalo artists are women.
- Artists are drawn from all age groups.
- Wood Buffalo artists are highly educated and have significant training and experience in the arts.
- Self-employment is the norm among professional artists.
- Over one-half of the professional artists surveyed work 40 hours / week or more on their art, despite the need for many artists to balance other work.
- Professional artists are generally satisfied with their arts activity and their life, but not their finances.
- Many professional artists have important financial challenges stemming from low household incomes.
- Artists have professional development needs that ACWB is trying to meet, including connecting with business / industry, help in applying for funding, and marketing assistance.

## Detailed findings from the survey of artists

### Artists are very active in Wood Buffalo, especially teaching

Teaching is a very common activity among artists responding to the survey. In fact, two of the most common arts activities done in Wood Buffalo in the past three years are mentoring others in the arts (44% of respondents) and teaching arts to others (42%).

Among the 57 artists who self-identified as professional, one-third teach art as their primary source of income. This is higher than any other income source, including non-arts and artistic work:

- Arts instructor / teacher: 33%
- Non-arts related occupation: 24%
- Artist: 22%

Naturally, many artists are very active in creating, performing, or presenting different works of art, including:

- Works of visual art / photography / installation / crafts: 54% of the 130 survey respondents
- Music or sound works: 33%
- Theatre: 28%
- Film / video / media arts work: 22%
- Written works (novel, poetry, spoken word, non-fiction, etc.): 14%
- Multimedia works: 12%
- Interdisciplinary works: 12%
- Dance: 11%

### Many artists work primarily in visual arts, music, and theatre

Wood Buffalo artists work in a wide range of disciplines. As shown in the table below, visual arts, music, and theatre are most common as primary artistic disciplines. While many artists are involved in arts education (as noted above), it is the primary area for only 6% of responding artists.

Primary discipline	% of artists
Arts education	6%
Crafts	6%
Dance	5%
Film / video / media art	8%
Interdisciplinary Arts	2%
Literary arts / writing	5%

Primary discipline	% of artists
Multimedia	1%
Music / sound	20%
Photography	4%
Theatre	13%
Visual / installation art	25%
Other	4%

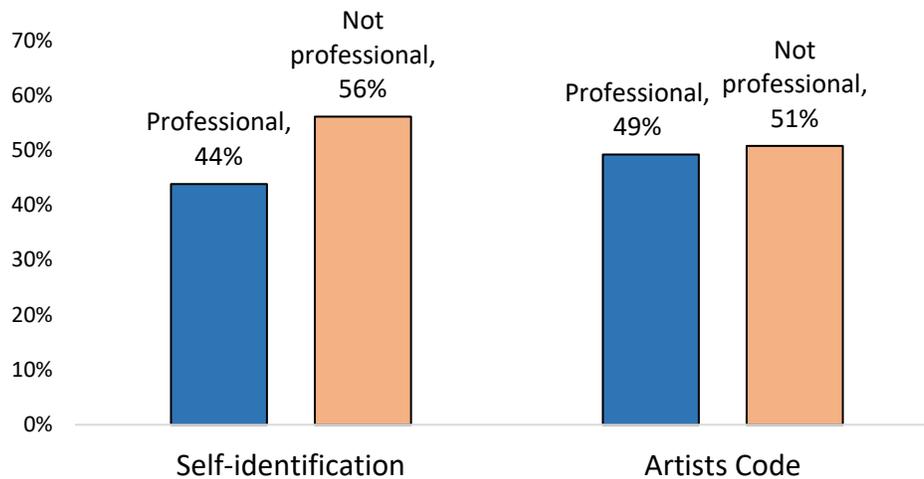
## Close to one-half of Wood Buffalo artists are professional

Forty-four percent of responding artists self-identify as a “professional”.

In addition to the self-identification question, the survey included a series of questions that could be used to assess professionalism based on the proposed Canadian Artists’ Code (developed in 1988), which provides a complex definition of professional artists.

As shown in Figure 15, using the Canadian Artists’ Code criteria, a higher percentage of artists (49%) could be considered professional than using self-identification (44%). This might be a sign of modesty on the part of some Wood Buffalo artists, or it might be a reflection of the number of artists active in arts education, who may or may not consider themselves to be professional artists.

Figure 15: Wood Buffalo artists: professional or not?



In the analysis related to the working lives of artists, separate statistics are presented for professional and non-professional artists, as many of the statistics are quite different between the two groups.

## Who are Wood Buffalo’s artists?

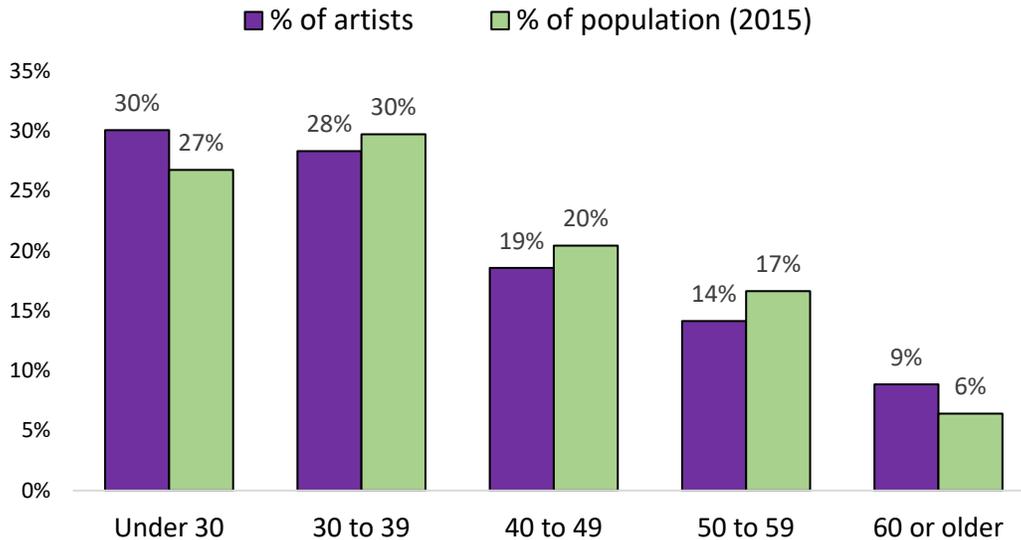
### Two-thirds of Wood Buffalo artists are women.

- Among all 130 artists responding to the survey, 67% are women.
- Among the 57 professional artists, 62% are women. (This is essentially equal to the percentage of Alberta artists who are female: 61%, based on Hill Strategies’ report *Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada’s Provinces and Territories in 2011*.)
- In the overall Wood Buffalo population, 45% are women (Source: 2015 Municipal Census)

## Artists are drawn from all age groups

Wood Buffalo artists generally reflect the age groups of the overall Wood Buffalo population, with only minor differences in each age range (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Age ranges of artists and the general population of Wood Buffalo



A comparison of professional and non-professional artists shows that non-professionals tend to be slightly older than professionals: 27% of non-professional artists are 50 years of age or over, compared with 18% of professional artists.

## Diverse artists

Among responding artists, 10% self-identified as an Aboriginal person (i.e., First Nations, Métis or Inuit). This is slightly higher than the proportion of the overall adult population of Wood Buffalo who indicated in the 2011 National Household Survey that they are of Aboriginal identity (8%).

Another 10% of responding artists self-identified as a member of a visible minority group, a percentage that is below the proportion in the overall population of Wood Buffalo (19%, based on the 2011 National Household Survey).

All Wood Buffalo artists speak English, and 9% also speak French, while 8% also speak another language.

## Artists are highly educated, with significant training and experience in the arts

Forty-seven percent of artists have a university degree (whether arts-related or not), a percentage that is even higher than all Alberta artists (39%) and much higher than the overall provincial labour force (29%, both figures drawn from Hill Strategies' report *Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Provinces and Territories in 2011*).

While university-level education is common among Wood Buffalo artists, other arts-related education methods are more common, such as mentors and private teachers (as shown in Figure 17).

Figure 17

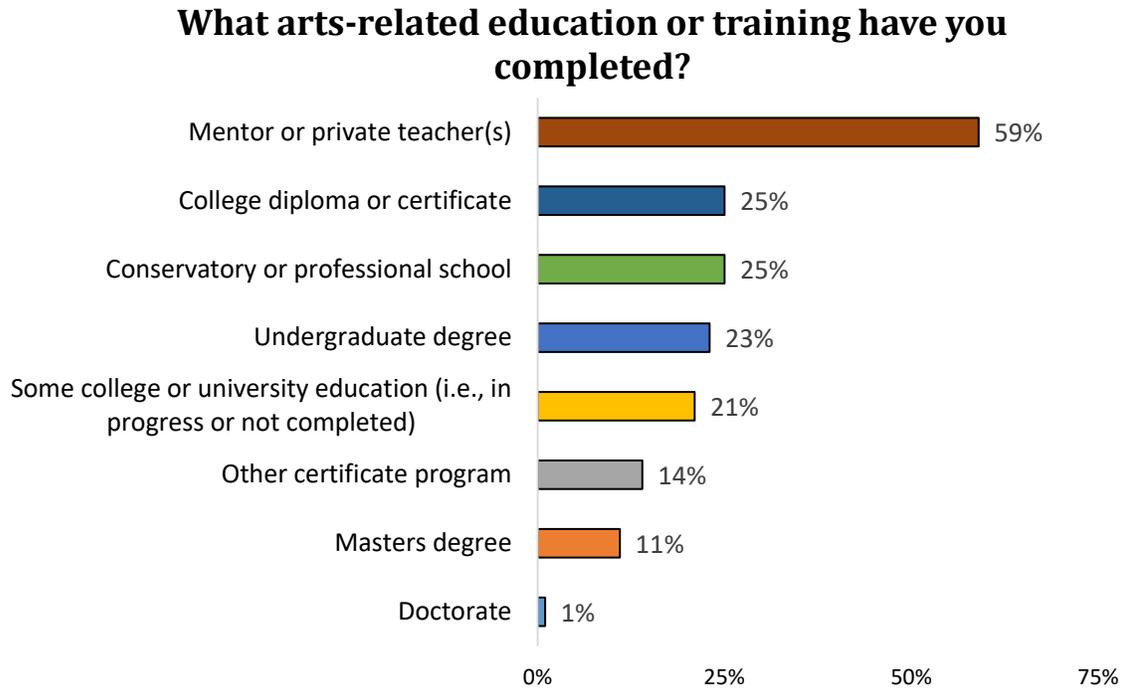
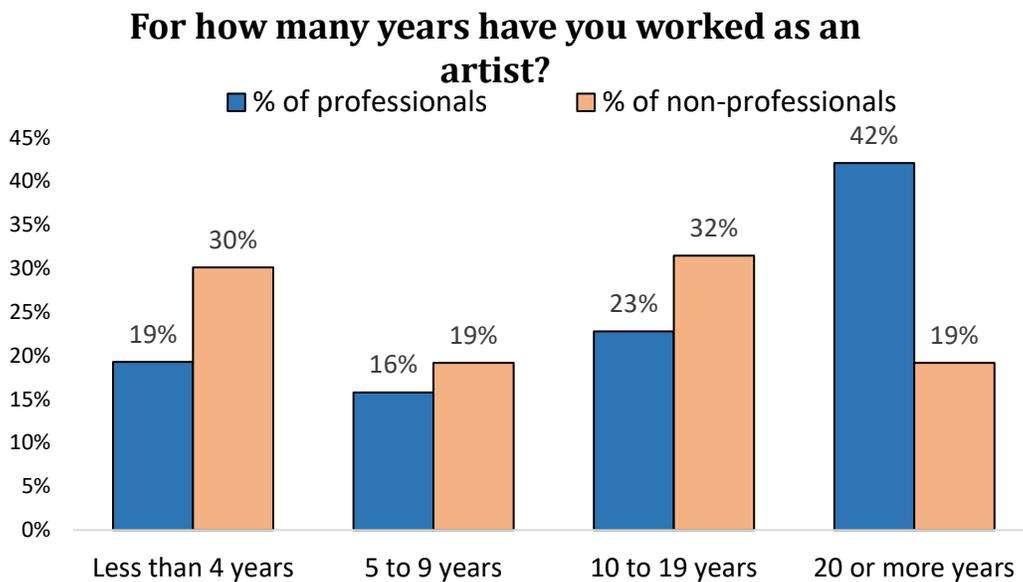


Figure 18 shows that Wood Buffalo artists are highly experienced, with 42% of professional artists having worked as an artist for 20 years or more. About two-thirds of professional artists indicated that they are “mid-career” or “established”. Non-professional artists tend to have much less experience.

Figure 18



## Health and well-being

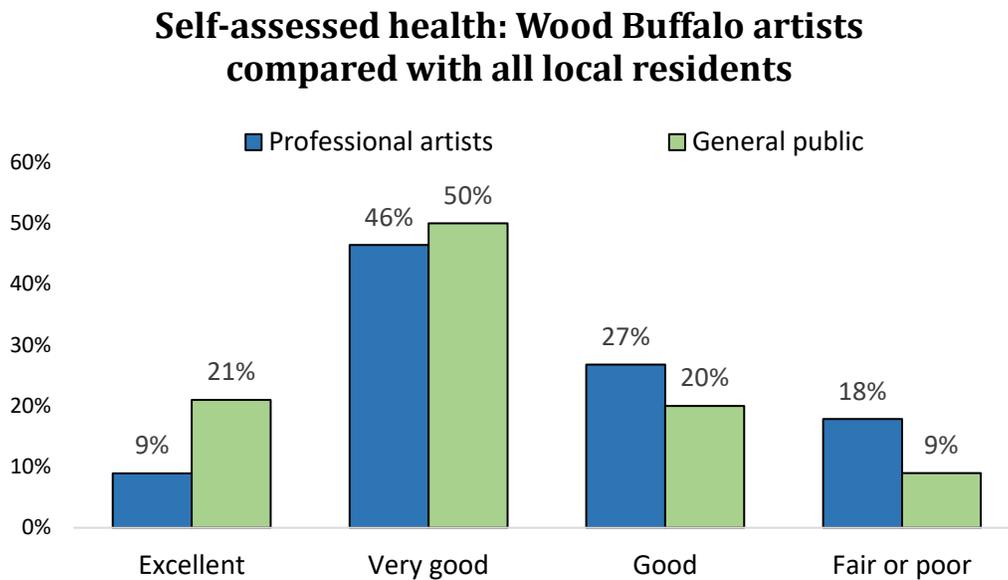
### Health of Wood Buffalo artists

Being an artist can be a demanding mental (and sometimes physical) enterprise. Two survey questions allow for a comparison of the health of Wood Buffalo artists with other residents.

The first of these questions addressed general health, with 9% of professional artists indicating that their health is “excellent” and another 46% indicating “very good”. About one in four artists rated their health as “good” (27%), another 16% indicated that their health is fair, and only 2% rated their health as “poor”. (The question noted that, “by health, we mean not only the absence of disease or injury but also physical, mental and social well-being”.)

Figure 19 shows that these self-assessed health ratings are somewhat lower than the ratings from a survey of the Wood Buffalo public in March of 2016.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 19



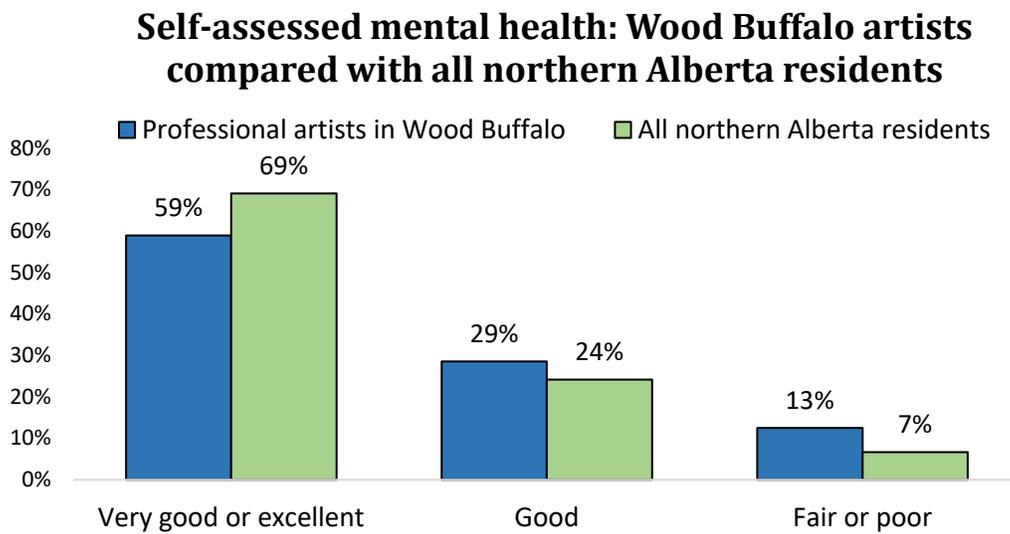
<sup>1</sup> Telephone survey of 407 local residents conducted for Arts Council Wood Buffalo by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. The survey results are a statistically representative sample of residents of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, with a maximum margin of error of 5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

A second question looked more specifically at mental health. In response to this question, 14% of professional artists indicated that their mental health is “excellent” and another 45% indicated “very good”. More than one in four artists rated their mental health as “good” (29%), another 9% indicated that their mental health is fair, and 4% rated their mental health as “poor”.

Benchmark data for all Wood Buffalo residents are not available for this question. Instead, artists’ self-assessed mental health is benchmarked to Statistics Canada data on northern Alberta residents.<sup>2</sup>

As shown in Figure 20, artists’ self-assessed mental health ratings are somewhat lower than those of all northern Alberta residents.

Figure 20



Regarding their health and ability levels, the survey asked artists how often a physical condition or mental condition or health problem reduces the amount or the kind of activity that they can do as an artist. While only 1 professional artist indicated that they are *often* limited in what they can do, another 25% are *sometimes* limited in their artistic work. Seventy-four percent of professional artists are never limited in their work by physical or mental conditions.

<sup>2</sup> Mental health data for the general population are drawn from the *Canadian Community Health Survey* of 2013-14, Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 105-0502, <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a05?lang=eng&id=01050502>, accessed November 30, 2016.

## Extended health coverage

One-half of professional artists in Wood Buffalo have extended health care coverage (49%). Arts-related employers are the most common means of obtaining extended health coverage:

- Arts-related employer: selected by 35% of those with extended health
- Spouse or partner (including their union or employer): 31%
- Non-arts employer or union: 31%
- Artists' own contributions: 23%

No professional artists in Wood Buffalo obtained extended health coverage through their work as an artist, an arts-related union, or an arts service organization.

## Stress levels

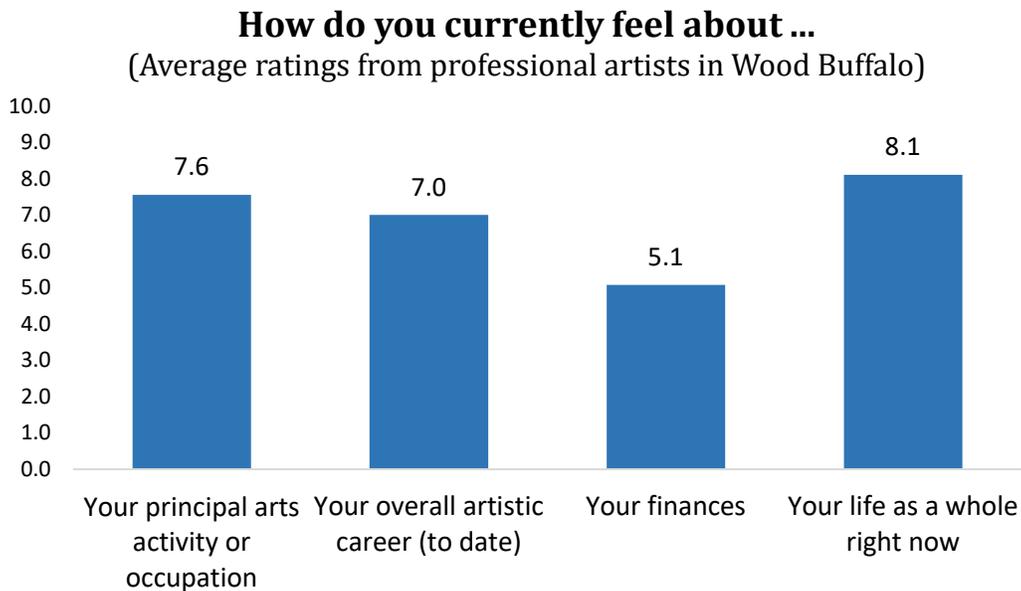
Stress is a significant part of many artists' lives, but nearly one-half of professional artists in Wood Buffalo indicated that most days are only a bit stressful (46%). Only 2% find most days extremely stressful:

- Extremely stressful (2% of professional artists, vs. 10% of non-professional artists)
- Quite a bit stressful (25% of professional artists, vs. 17% of non-professional artists)
- A bit stressful (46% of professional artists, vs. 48% of non-professional artists)
- Not very stressful (27% of professional artists, vs. 22% of non-professional artists)
- Not at all stressful (0% of professional artists, vs. 3% of non-professional artists)

## Professional artists are generally satisfied with their arts activity and their life, but not their finances

The survey asked a series of questions about respondents' perceptions of their work, finances, and life.<sup>3</sup> Figure 21 indicates that professional artists in Wood Buffalo have reasonably strong satisfaction with their arts activity or occupation (average rating of 7.6), their overall artistic career (average rating of 7.0), and their "life as a whole right now" (average rating of 8.1).

Figure 21



There is a national benchmark for the question about quality of life as a whole. Professional artists in Wood Buffalo rated their satisfaction with life at about the same level as the average for all Canadians (8.1 vs. 8.0).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The following questions are about certain areas of your career and life. Please rate your feelings about each question using a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means "Very dissatisfied" and 10 means "Very satisfied". How do you currently feel about your principal arts activity or occupation (i.e., the arts activity on which you spend the most time)?; How do you feel about your overall artistic career (to date)?; How do you currently feel about your finances?; How do you feel about your life as a whole right now?

<sup>4</sup> 8.0 is a combined average from 10 iterations of this survey question between 2003 and 2011 in the Canadian Community Health Survey and the General Social Survey, data obtained from *An Assessment of Life Satisfaction Responses on Recent Statistics Canada Surveys*, Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/2013351/t004-eng.htm>, accessed September 21, 2016.

## Working lives and incomes of Wood Buffalo artists

### Self-employment is the norm among professional artists

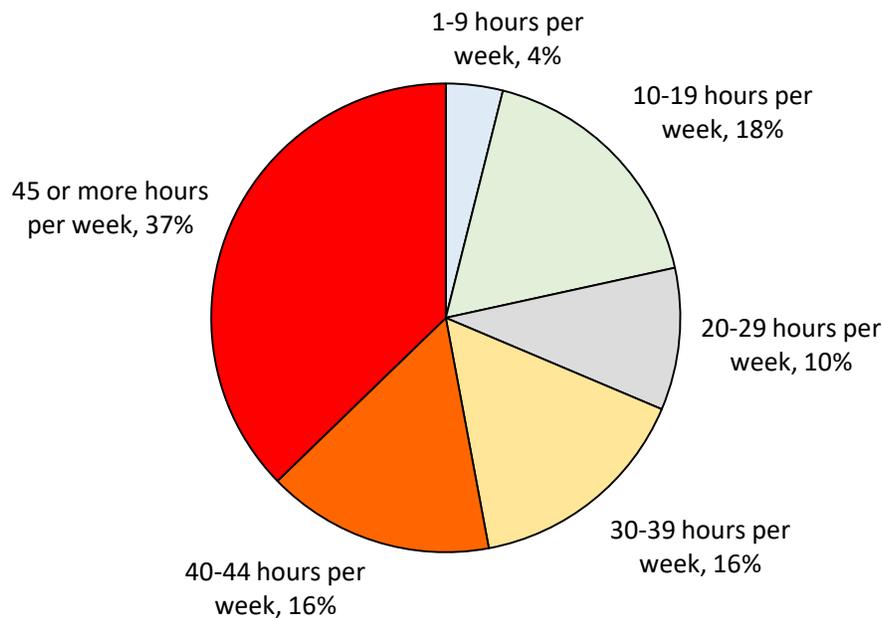
- 81% of professional artists are self-employed in some fashion
  - 48% are fully self-employed
  - 33% are both self-employed and employed by someone else (i.e., multiple positions)

**Over one-half of the professional artists surveyed work 40 hours / week or more on their art, despite the need for many artists to balance other work.**

A majority of professional artists in Wood Buffalo (53%) work at least 40 hours per week on their art (see Figure 22).

Figure 22

**Approximately how many hours per week do you typically spend on your art and on art-related activities** (incl. promoting your work, practicing, professional development, rehearsing, teaching, working with arts associations or unions, looking for work, etc)



Non-professional artists tend to work much less on their art, with 47% of them working less than 10 hours per week on their artistic endeavours.

Almost all professional artists must attempt to balance time spent on their art and other work. About two-thirds of professional artists in Wood Buffalo (68%) spend more time on their art than on other work. Even among these artists, many rely on income from a variety of sources to make ends meet, including other work inside or outside the arts sector.

Seventy-two percent of artists also volunteer on arts-related activities in Wood Buffalo (through mentoring, arts education, performing, committee work, board work, etc.). Typically, artists commit about three hours per week to these volunteer activities in the arts.

### Income from work as an artist

Many professional artists in Wood Buffalo have low incomes from their art practices: 52% of survey respondents earn less than \$20,000 annually from their art. Work as an artist is the primary income source for only 20% of Wood Buffalo artists. Another 29% have arts teaching as their main income source.

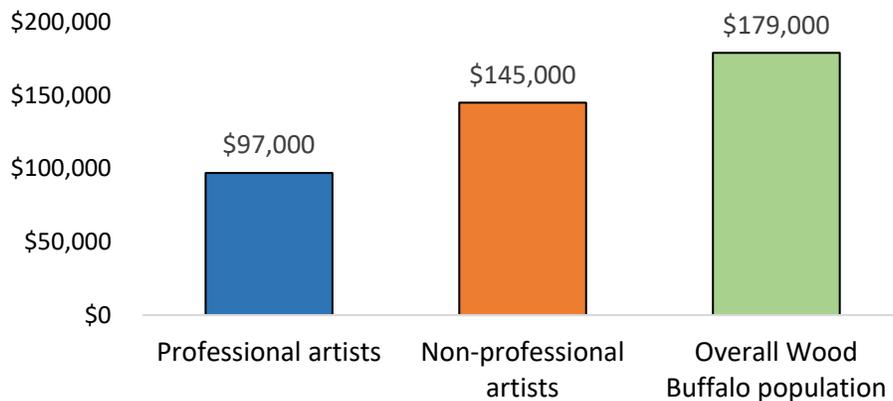
Seventy percent of Wood Buffalo artists have never applied for a government arts grant. Another 15% only did so more than three years ago. Just 16% of Wood Buffalo artists have applied for a government arts grant within the past three years.

Only 20% of Wood Buffalo artists have ever received a government arts grant.<sup>5</sup> Most common is a provincial grant (57% of those who have received a government arts grant), followed by municipal (48%) and federal (30%). *Note: Some artists have received grants from multiple levels of government, so these percentages add up to more than 100%.*

### Key financial challenge of many professional artists: relatively low household income

Relative to the local cost of living, low household income is quite prevalent among professional artists in Wood Buffalo. As shown in Figure 23, professional artists have a median household income of about \$97,000, which is 46% lower than the median household income for all Wood Buffalo residents (\$179,000).

Figure 23: Median household income



<sup>5</sup> 65% of those artists who have applied for a grant have received one at some point in their careers.

Many artists with low incomes have difficulties meeting basic household needs. In fact, 42% of professional artists have had difficulties during the past 12 months. Examples include:

- Needed to see a dentist but didn't go: 26% of all professional artists
- Needed to see a doctor but didn't go: 21%
- Didn't pay full rent or mortgage: 13%
- Didn't pay full heating, electricity or telephone bill: 13%
- Not enough food in the household: 11%

**Professional artists have a lower rate of home ownership than other Wood Buffalo residents.**

- Professional artists: 54% own their homes
- Non-professional artists: 71% are homeowners
- Overall Wood Buffalo population: 61% are homeowners (Source: 2015 Municipal Census)

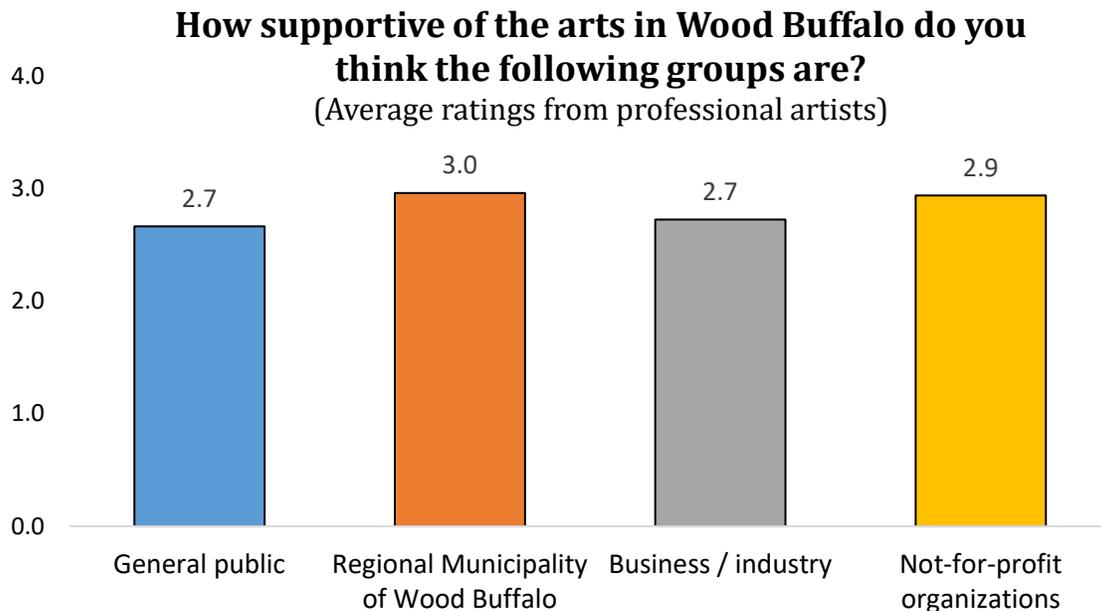
## Networks, local sense of belonging, and perceptions of supportiveness toward to the arts

The survey examined the networks of artists in Wood Buffalo. Eighty-six percent of professional artists in Wood Buffalo agreed that they feel part of one or more groups that shares their interests, attitudes and/or beliefs (54% somewhat agreed and 32% strongly agreed). This is higher than the proportion of non-professional artists in Wood Buffalo who agreed with the statement (79%).

When asked about their sense of belonging to Wood Buffalo, 29% of professional artists declared it to be very strong, a percentage that is identical to that of all Alberta residents.<sup>6</sup> Another 50% of professional artists in Wood Buffalo indicated that their local sense of belonging is somewhat strong, for a total of 79% having a very or somewhat strong local sense of belonging. The proportion of non-professional artists in Wood Buffalo with a strong local sense of belonging is very similar (76%).

Professional artists in Wood Buffalo were asked to rate the supportiveness toward the arts of various key groups in Wood Buffalo using a four-point scale (not at all = 1, not very much = 2, somewhat = 3, and very much = 4). Their ratings are summarized in Figure 24, which indicates that the RM of Wood Buffalo and not-for-profit organizations are perceived to be slightly more supportive (average ratings of 3.0 and 2.9), while the general public and business / industry are perceived to be slightly less supportive (average ratings of 2.7). All four key groups received average ratings that are roughly equivalent to a response of “somewhat supportive”.

Figure 24



<sup>6</sup> Alberta data are drawn from Statistics Canada’s 2013 General Social Survey, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2015004-eng.htm>, accessed November 30, 2016.

## Artists' perceptions of local strengths and challenges

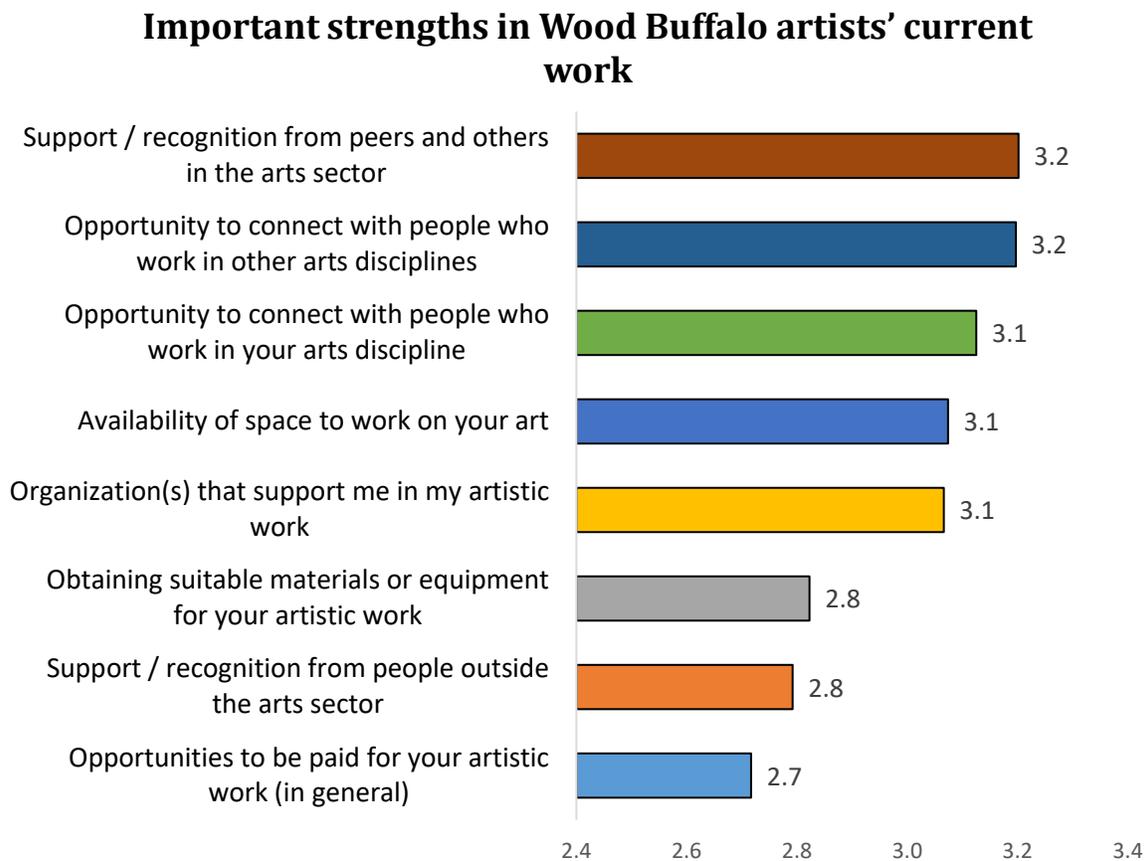
Wood Buffalo artists were asked whether they perceive 16 items as challenges or strengths in their current artistic work (using a five-point scale where 1 = a major challenge and 5 = a major strength). Given this scale, higher average scores represent greater strengths.

The chart below highlights the eight items that were perceived as strengths for the largest number of artists (represented by a high average rating on the above-noted scale).

Figure 25 shows that five items received very similar average ratings (3.2 or 3.1):

- Support / recognition from peers and others in the arts sector
- Opportunity to connect with people who work in other arts disciplines
- Opportunity to connect with people who work in their arts discipline
- Availability of space to work on their art
- Organization(s) that support artists in their artistic work

Figure 25



Artists were asked an open-ended text question about the greatest strength in the broader arts community in Wood Buffalo. An analysis of these responses shows that three themes most commonly emerged: community; support; and artists.

These three commonly mentioned strengths are closely linked, as can be seen in the comments from artists. Regarding community, artists indicated:

- Strong community, people are approachable and helpful, positive attitude, willingness to work with you, open minded, generous with their time, connected and willing to help make introductions in their community!
- Great support from other crafters, artists and customers. It tends to be a small world here and people can be so helpful in spreading the word about your handmade goods
- A very tight community, open and supporting of newcomers
- Community support and spirit

Regarding support, artists provided comments such as:

- Supportive community and collective drive to promote arts.
- Support from fellow artists
- Small artist community is very supportive, and there is lots of opportunity to work and develop career especially for young artists, due to demand. Lots of money available from regional organizations/business, with good facilities and equipment.
- The arts community in Wood Buffalo, in general terms, is very supportive and encouraging of one another. Due to our smaller nature, most are very collaborative and want to see one another succeed, compared to the competitive nature in larger communities.

Regarding artists, specific comments include:

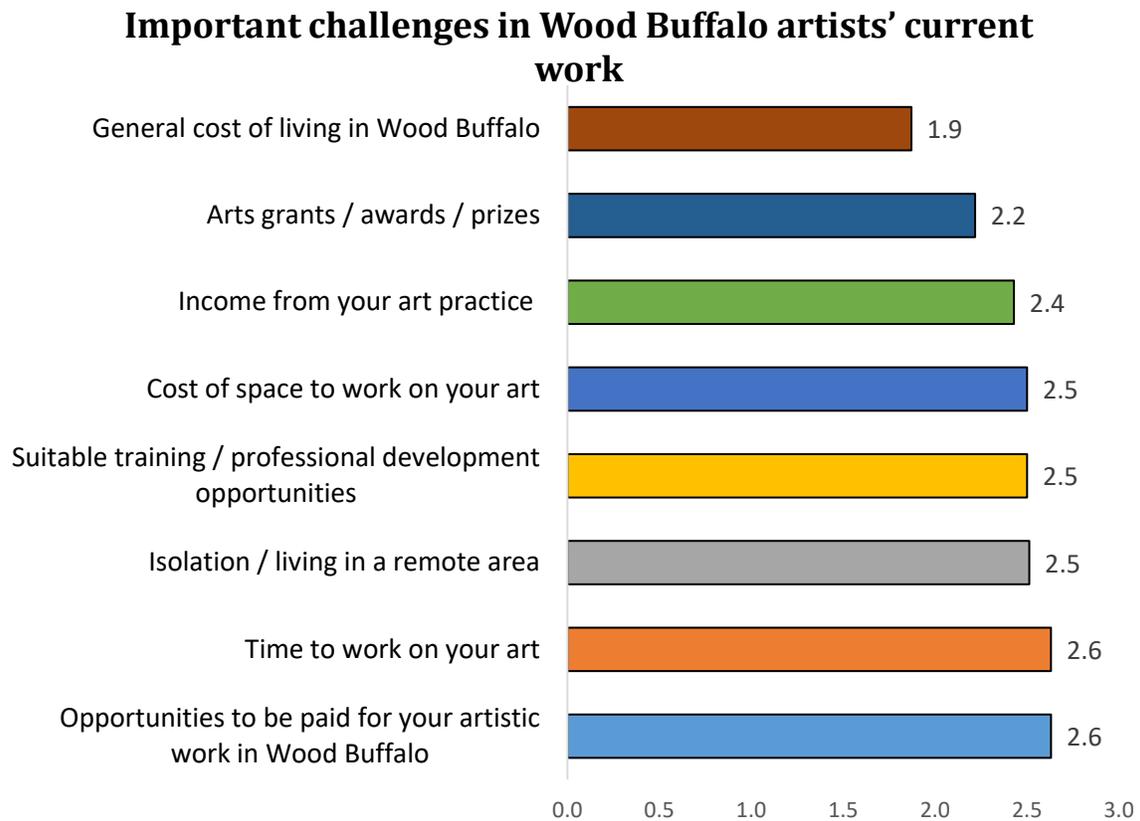
- There is a good core of driven artists making things happen in the area. It's encouraging.
- Passion of artists in our region.
- The artists' market is not saturated.

Figure 26 shows the eight items that were perceived as challenges by the largest number of Wood Buffalo artists (i.e., received the lowest average ratings).

Wood Buffalo’s cost of living is clearly the greatest challenge for artists, as shown by its average rating of 1.9. Other significant challenges include arts grants (average rating of 2.2) and income from their arts practice (average rating of 2.4).

The high local cost of living was rated as a major challenge (i.e., rated as 1 out of 5) by 41% of responding artists, followed by the cost of space to work on their art (33%). Interestingly, cost of space to work on their art had a middling overall rating (2.5), because it was not ranked as a moderate challenge by many other artists. In other words, the cost of space appears to be an acute challenge for one-third of artists but not that significant for many others.

Figure 26



The three themes that emerged most clearly from an open-ended question about the greatest weakness in the broader arts community in Wood Buffalo are infrastructure, interest, and marketing.

Many artists commented about weaknesses in the local arts infrastructure:

- Infrastructure (rehearsals, performance, storage, creation)
- There is no appropriate space for people to display their art. A fire hallway doesn't count and can be a turn off.
- That we do not have an actual art gallery. An emergency exit hallway at a sports facility and a gallery at a college that is rarely open is rather insulting.
- The lack of venues to showcase and sell our arts, specially visual arts: we have a cement block corridor called a gallery at MacDonald Island, a hidden corridor somewhere at the hospital; a library floor not well attended, a city that displays photographs/pictures bought on-line in most of their offices, a city that does not pay its artists displaying arts at the Fort McMurray Experience, a city that hires photographs and artists from all over the places except the municipality, and the list goes on.
- Quality places to exhibit art
- Lack of affordable studio/performance space
- The opportunities for space to create, to exhibit, to collaborate, etc. is sorely lacking.
- Lack of collective studios, galleries. Physical distance from other artists. Lack of 'art hangouts'- things like coffee shops, art stores, open studios, art and music supportive bars etc.
- Dedicated art space and bylaws prohibiting performance art in public spaces.

Regarding interest from the public, artists provided comments such as:

- Not too many people from the community seem to be interested in the arts. Many do not even know about the cultural / traditional arts that come from this territory.
- Public has no idea how much talent we have in this region. Artists perform and show, but no one shows up.
- The region lacks diversity in livelihoods and hobbies, leading to a lack of public interest and engagement in arts outside of children's education.

Specific comments regarding marketing include:

- Things are poorly advertised or not advertised at all.
- Lack of promotion of local artists or inventory of who in RMWB has talent; expectation that talent is free.
- Broader advertising of events. The same core group of audience attends most events.

## Artists have professional development needs that ACWB is trying to meet

Given the financial struggles of many professional artists in Wood Buffalo, it is not surprising that the top two professional development needs are connecting with business and industry (selected by 65% of professional artists) and help with applying for grants or other funding (selected by 64%).

For professional artists, other important professional development needs include finding or strengthening a community of artists (selected by 60%) and marketing advice or expertise (also selected by 60%).

Non-professional artists have very different professional development needs. Their top needs are arts instruction or training (selected by 63% of non-professional artists), networking (53%), and finding or strengthening a community of artists (51%).

## Future goals of Wood Buffalo artists

When asked what their most important artistic goals are during the next five years, professional artists most commonly selected:

- Achieving a higher level of artistic expression or achievement: 70%
- Participating in important exhibitions, performances or other artistic activities: 68%
- Spending more time on their art: 66%
- Increasing activity / number of works: 63%

For non-professional artists, important goals include:

- Increasing artistic skills or competence: 80%
- Spending more time on their art: 69%
- Participating in important exhibitions, performances or other artistic activities: 66%
- Increasing activity / number of works: 61%

## *Key findings regarding individual arts workers*

As noted earlier in this report, the relatively small number of responses from independent arts workers and non-senior staff members of arts organizations / businesses (26) means that only a very brief highlight of key findings from this section of the survey is presented in this report.

The 26 respondents work in a range of disciplines, including:

- Visual / installation art (10 responses)
- Theatre (6 responses)
- Music / sound (5 responses)
- Photography (5 responses)
- Interdisciplinary (5 responses)
- Arts education (5 responses)
- Crafts (5 responses)
- Literary arts / Writing (3 responses)
- Film / video / media art (3 responses)
- Dance (2 responses)
- Multimedia (2 responses)
- Other (3 responses): Administration; Arts administration; Community Events.

When the arts workers were forced to select only one discipline, visual / installation art and theatre each had 6 selections.

Nearly one-half of the respondents have worked in Wood Buffalo's arts community for less than two years. On the other hand, five have worked in Wood Buffalo's arts community for more than 10 years.

### **Demographics**

Most responding arts workers are women (15). Nine are men, and one is transgender.

Sixteen of the 26 respondents have at least an undergraduate university degree.

Seven of the 26 arts workers are under 30 years of age, and another nine are between 30 and 39 years old. Five are between 40 and 49, and another five are 50 or older.

Only two arts workers use languages other than English at home (one French and one other language).

### **Health and health care**

Essentially the same percentage of Wood Buffalo arts workers as artists indicated that their health is either excellent or very good (54% vs. 55%). Both these percentages are lower than that for all Wood Buffalo residents (71%).

Very similar percentages of arts workers (62%) and artists (59%) rated their mental health as excellent or very good. Once again, these percentages are somewhat lower than that for all Wood Buffalo residents (69%).

While only 49% of professional artists in Wood Buffalo have extended health care coverage, 73% of Wood Buffalo arts workers have such coverage.

## **Income**

Many of the arts workers receive income from a variety of sources, including non arts-related occupations (11 responses), arts management or administration (10 responses), and artistic work (8 responses). Nineteen of the 26 arts workers do other paid work in addition to their arts work.

Main sources of income are most commonly arts management or administration (9 responses) and non-arts-related occupations (8 responses).

Because of the small number of respondents, a calculation of average income may not be accurate and is therefore not provided here. The largest groups of arts workers have overall household incomes under \$100,000 (7 responses) between \$100,000 and \$149,999 (6 responses), between \$150,000 and \$199,999 (6 responses), and between \$200,000 and \$299,999 (5 responses).

A large majority of arts workers (18 of 26) also volunteer their time on arts-related activities in Wood Buffalo, in addition to their paid work.

Unlike professional artists, the vast majority of arts workers (20 of the 26) have not had difficulty meeting their basic household needs within the past 12 months.

## **The arts and the Wood Buffalo community**

Regarding their connections and networks, almost all the arts workers (23 of the 26) indicated that they do feel part of one or more groups that shares their interests, attitudes and/or beliefs.

Similarly, the vast majority of arts workers (20 of 26) feel that they have a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to Wood Buffalo.

## **Local strengths and challenges**

Arts workers in Wood Buffalo collectively indicated that major strengths for them include support / recognition from peers and others in the arts sector (average rating of 3.6 on a 5-point scale), opportunity to connect with people who work in other arts disciplines (3.3), obtaining suitable materials or equipment for their arts work (also 3.3), and organizations that support them in their arts work (3.2).

Some of the key challenges for arts workers in Wood Buffalo are the local cost of living (average rating of 2.1), suitable training / professional development opportunities (2.5), and isolation / living in a remote area (also 2.5).

## Satisfaction with their careers and life as a whole

Arts workers were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of their work, finances, and life.<sup>7</sup> Compared with professional artists in Wood Buffalo, arts workers are:

- Similarly satisfied with their principal arts work (average rating of 7.2, compared with 7.6 for professional artists).
- As satisfied with their overall arts career (average ratings of 6.9 for arts workers and 7.0 for professional artists).
- Similarly dissatisfied with their finances (average ratings of 5.6 for arts workers and 5.1 for professional artists).

Arts workers and professional artists in Wood Buffalo also have similar average ratings of their lives as a whole (7.9 and 8.1). These averages are almost identical to the average for all Canadians (8.0).<sup>8</sup>

## Professional development needs and final comments

Among responding arts workers, key professional development needs include:

- Connecting with business and industry (11 responses)
- Finding or strengthening a community of arts workers (11 responses)
- Arts instruction or training (10 responses)
- Networking (9 responses)

Particularly interesting final comments were provided by a few arts workers:

- Thank you for taking the time to do this survey for everyone. I've noticed in the last 6+ years of being here the arts community has really bloomed which is wonderful. Keep up the awesome work, cheers!!!
- It's a good survey. Let's hope the RMWB listens.
- I would like to know more about other work and volunteer opportunities in the arts.
- Please stop adding more chain stores/restaurants and start building art spaces!!

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<sup>7</sup> The following questions are about certain areas of your career and life. Please rate your feelings about each question using a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means "Very dissatisfied" and 10 means "Very satisfied". How do you currently feel about your principal arts work?; How do you feel about your overall artistic career (to date)?; How do you currently feel about your finances?; How do you feel about your life as a whole right now?

<sup>8</sup> 8.0 is a combined average from 10 iterations of this survey question between 2003 and 2011 in the Canadian Community Health Survey and the General Social Survey, data obtained from *An Assessment of Life Satisfaction Responses on Recent Statistics Canada Surveys*, Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/2013351/t004-eng.htm>, accessed September 21, 2016.

## *Key findings regarding arts businesses and organizations*

The relatively small number of responses on behalf of arts businesses and organizations (22), along with known gaps in the survey responses, means that only brief highlights of the organizational findings are presented in this report.

The 22 responding businesses and organizations include:

- 10 for-profit business
- 4 incorporated not-for-profit societies without charitable status
- 2 registered charities
- 2 government organizations (i.e., part of municipal, provincial, or federal government structure)
- 1 organization that is part of a college structure
- 1 organization that is part of another larger organization
- 2 other types of organizations

The businesses and organizations were established between 1974 and 2015, with the average date of establishment being 1999 (i.e., 16 years before the survey).

In terms of arts disciplines, the 22 businesses and organizations are most commonly involved in:

- Visual / installation art (11 responses)
- Theatre (9 responses)
- Photography (9 responses)
- Literary arts / Writing (7 responses)
- Film / video / media art (7 responses)
- Arts education (7 responses)
- Crafts (6 responses)
- Music / sound (6 responses)
- Dance (6 responses)
- Multimedia (5 responses)
- Interdisciplinary (4 responses)

Most specifically, the businesses and organizations are involved in the arts as:

- Not-for-profit support organizations (6 responses)
- Arts training organizations (5 responses)
- Theatres (4 responses)
- Educational institutions (4 responses)
- Art galleries (3 responses)
- Equipment stores (2 responses)
- Supply stores (2 responses)
- Music stores (1 response)
- Book stores (1 response)
- Personal studios (1 response)

## Organization workforce and volunteers

Twenty-one respondents entered their paid staff levels, but five of these respondents simply indicated that they have no staff. The other businesses and organizations have paid staff in the following categories:

- Full-time and full-year: total of 68 in 15 organizations
- Full-time but only partial year / seasonal / short-term contract: total of 41 in 9 organizations
- Part-time and full-year: total of 27 in 7 organizations
- Part-time but only partial year / seasonal / short-term contract: total of 110 in 6 organizations

Only 10 businesses and organizations indicated their volunteer levels during the past year. The total number of volunteers in these organizations was 526.

## Artists and arts supports

Fifteen of the 22 organizations hire or engage artists as part of their activities. These 15 businesses or organizations hired or engaged a total of 114 Wood Buffalo artists during the past year.

Many of the businesses and organizations offer assistance to the arts and artists, including:

- Arts instruction or training (15 responses)
- Hosting arts events / festivals / performances / exhibitions (13 responses)
- Organizing / strengthening the community of artists (12 responses)
- Networking (12 responses)
- Help with working with the community (9 responses)
- Financial advice or expertise (8 responses)
- Marketing advice or expertise (7 responses)
- Help with applying for grants or other funding (6 responses)
- Legal advice or expertise (4 responses)

## Attendance / participation

Eleven of the businesses and organizations are not attendance-based organizations. Only eight provided their total attendance, which amounted to just over 60,000 people during the past year.

## Finances

Because only seven organizations reported their total revenues, summary data of the responses to this question are not provided here.

In terms of the current financial health of their businesses and organizations, two respondents characterized their situation as “very challenging”, and one more indicated that their situation is “somewhat challenging”.

Six respondents selected “OK”, and another six selected “somewhat strong”. Only one business or organization selected “very strong”.

When asked whether they would pinpoint any of the organization’s revenue sources as being particularly vital to its existence, sales were much more commonly selected than any other option:

- Earned revenues / sales (12 responses)
- Fundraising / private sector revenues (2 responses)
- Revenues from municipal government sources (2 responses)
- Revenues from provincial government sources (0 responses)
- Revenues from federal government sources (0 responses)
- Revenues from other government sources (2 responses)

A majority of the businesses and organizations (13 of the 20 responding at this point in the survey) had never applied for government arts funding. All seven of the organizations that had applied for government arts funding had received such funding during the previous three years. Five had received provincial funding, and the same number had received municipal funding. Only one responding organization had received federal funding.

### Perceived benefits and impacts

When asked about their perceptions of their importance related to various potential societal benefits and impacts, responding businesses and organizations were most likely to rate their work in the following areas as “very important”:

- Arts and culture education
- Developing and supporting artists (in general)
- Developing and supporting Wood Buffalo artists
- Connecting the arts and artists to audiences
- Discovering and supporting the next generation of artistic talent
- Making people think

Many of the businesses and organizations are engaged in (or collaborate with groups or businesses in) many other areas of society:

- Elementary or secondary schools (12 responses)
- Other cultural organizations (11 responses)
- Sports and recreation (8 responses)
- Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Association, or other business groups (7 responses)
- Post-secondary education and/or research (5 responses)
- Tourism (5 responses)
- Aboriginal groups (5 responses)
- Immigration and cultural diversity (4 responses)
- Religion (4 responses)
- Associations or unions (4 responses)
- Seniors’ care (3 responses)
- Social services (3 responses)
- Health (2 responses)

- Law or politics (2 responses)
- Environment (1 response)
- Housing, shelter, development (1 response)

### Strengths and challenges

The businesses and organizations perceived key strengths in their current environment to include:

- Education / Young audience / participation development (average rating of 4.2 on a 5-point scale)
- Developing and maintaining community partnerships (4.2)
- Support from the general public in Wood Buffalo (3.8)
- Community engagement or outreach (3.8)

Perceived weaknesses include:

- Competition from other demands on people's time (average rating of 2.4 on a 5-point scale)
- Attracting volunteers (2.5)
- Volunteer retention or burnout (2.6)

### Future development

When asked to select the five most important elements for their future development, there was no overwhelming consensus among responding businesses and organizations:

- Support from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (6 responses)
- Support from the general public in Wood Buffalo (6 responses)
- Support from business / industry in Wood Buffalo (5 responses)
- Increasing sales / attendance / participation (5 responses)
- Paying staff a salary or wage that affects the local cost of living (4 responses)
- Marketing (4 responses)
- Staff development (including training, mentoring, and succession management) (3 responses)
- Staff capacity (3 responses)
- Financial health (3 responses)
- Facilities / infrastructure (3 responses)
- Volunteer retention or burnout (2 responses)
- Technological change / Integration of new technologies (2 responses)
- Paying staff a salary or wage that is competitive with other local businesses / industries (2 responses)
- Education / Young audience development (2 responses)
- Competition from other demands on people's time (2 responses)
- Community engagement or outreach (2 responses)
- Attracting volunteers (2 responses)
- Government relations (1 response)
- Developing and maintaining community partnerships (1 response)
- Competition from within the arts sector (1 response)

- Competition from other sources of entertainment (1 response)

### Final comments and suggestions

Interesting final comments were provided by a few business and organizational representatives:

- Cool survey, thanks for caring about the arts in our community ;)
- Wood Buffalo is all about sports and recreation. Not everyone is into sports. Recreation here focuses on physical activity and promoting health and wellness. Musicians, actors, and dancers are high activity, energized performers. The biggest mistake ever was the dissolution of the Visual and Performing Arts program at Keyano College.
- The arts community feels very fragmented and divided in Fort McMurray. There seems to be a harsh divide between "gallery" artists and supporters and "independent" artists. It would be nice if the gap could be bridged so more collaboration could happen.
- I'm looking forward to seeing the art and culture of our region go from strength to strength.