Professional dance performers in Canada in 2016:
Activities, incomes, health, and career development

Based on a survey by the Dancer Transition Resource Centre
Analysis by Hill Strategies Research Inc.

December 2016

What is in this report?

This report summarizes important characteristics of professional dancers with a performance career in Canada, including their dance work, their demographic and family situation, their working lives and incomes, their health and well-being, as well as their career development and transitions. The analysis is based on a survey of 532 dancers by the Dancer Transition Resource Centre (DTRC) in June 2016. Where appropriate, comparisons are made to similar questions from a DTRC survey in 2005 (which covered dancers' activities in 2003/04).

Contents

Professional dance performers

Among the 532 professional dancers who responded to the survey, contemporary / modern dance is by far the most common primary dance form:

- Contemporary / modern: 57% of respondents
- Ballet: 15%
- Musical theatre / Jazz: 13%
- Urban: 9%
- 12 other dance forms were each selected by 3% or less of performers (Aboriginal; Aerial; African; Baroque; Capoeira; Classical Spanish; East Asian; Folkloric; Integrated and mixed abilities; Middle Eastern; Percussive; South Asian)
- *Note: The percentages add to more than 100%, as a small proportion of performers entered multiple primary dance forms.*

The proportion of respondents from areas other than contemporary dance and ballet is much higher than in previous DTRC surveys, due in part to the distribution efforts undertaken by the DTRC and other organizations (see “Methods” box below).

Dance activities

The risk of dance-related injuries as well as the uncertain marketplace for professional dancers means that some dancers may not perform in a given year. The DTRC survey found that 11% of respondents did not dance professionally in 2015. “Lack of performance work / contracts” was the most common reason for the lack of professional performances.

Among those who did perform in 2015, a typical dancer participated in 10 professional performances, but this median amount masks substantial differences between dancers:

- 34% did 1 to 5 performances.
- 18% did 6 to 10 performances.
- 20% did 11 to 20 performances.
- 15% did 21 to 50 performances.
- 13% did 51 or more performances.

Compared with 2003/04, many more dancers had 10 or fewer performances in 2015 (51% in 2015 vs. 26% in 2003/04). The median number of performances was about 23 in 2003/04 (compared with 10 in 2015). *(Note: The 2016 survey covered a broader range of performers than previous iterations, including reaching more non-members of the DTRC. Some changes over time may be influenced by the 2016 survey’s broader coverage.)*

Methods

The DTRC has conducted a survey of dancers roughly every 10 years since its inception. The 2016 survey addresses a number of important issues in the dance milieu, including dancers' activities in 2015, demographic information, income sources and amounts, views on career development and transition, and DTRC membership.

The survey, which was conducted online, received 532 responses between June 1 and 30, 2016. Of the 532 surveys, 84% were completed in English at DancerSurvey.ca and 16% in French at EnqueteDanseurs.ca. 49% of respondents are DTRC members.

The DTRC's survey promotion efforts included: 1) contacting people in the extended networks of DTRC members and past participants of DTRC programming; 2) online advertising to target the immediate connections of those who maintain a digital relationship with the DTRC; 3) individual appeals to members in dance disciplines or geographic areas that are underrepresented within DTRC's membership; 4) in-person appeals and postcard distribution at events happening in the vicinity of the DTRC's national and regional offices; 5) leveraging the networks of provincial arts service organizations, dance schools and other dance institutions across the country by requesting that the survey information be circulated to their members, students, audiences, and social media networks.

Because the overall number of professional dance performers in Canada is not known, it is difficult to estimate a potential margin of error in the dataset. The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) estimates that there are 8,100 dancers in Canada who worked more at their dance activities than at any other occupation in May of 2011. However, the definition of dancers in the NHS includes professionals active in a wide range of dance activities, including teaching dance or choreography (perhaps exclusively). This survey, in contrast, targeted only those dancers with professional performance as part of their dance career.

As with all surveys where individuals self-select whether to respond (rather than being chosen at random), there is some uncertainty as to whether the responses would appropriately represent all professional dancers in Canada. If it had been possible to conduct a random sample, 532 responses from an estimated total population of 8,100 would represent a maximum margin of error of plus or minus 4.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. This is a high level of statistical reliability.

While dancers performed in many different types of venues in 2015, Figure 1 shows that "traditional" performance-specific theatres (or stages or studios) were most common. However, site-specific and alternative venues were also fairly common.

Figure 1

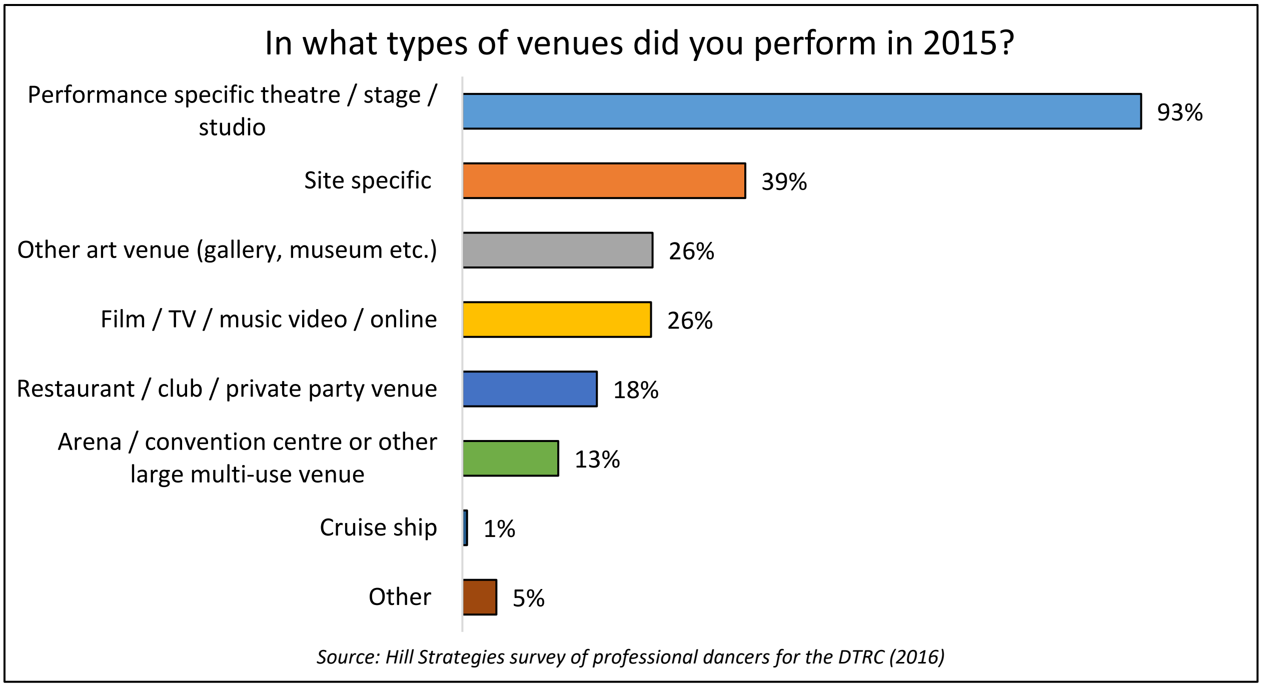
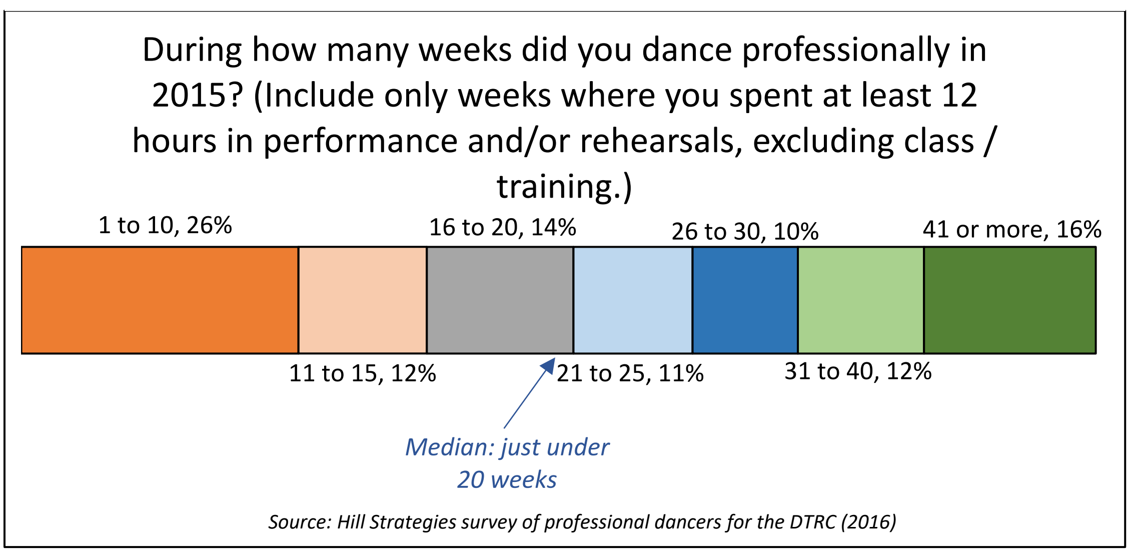


Figure 2 shows that there are many different realities among dancers with regards to weeks worked in 2015. While the median number of weeks worked is just under 20, one-quarter of dancers worked 10 weeks or less in 2015. In contrast, 16% of dancers worked 41 weeks or more during the year.

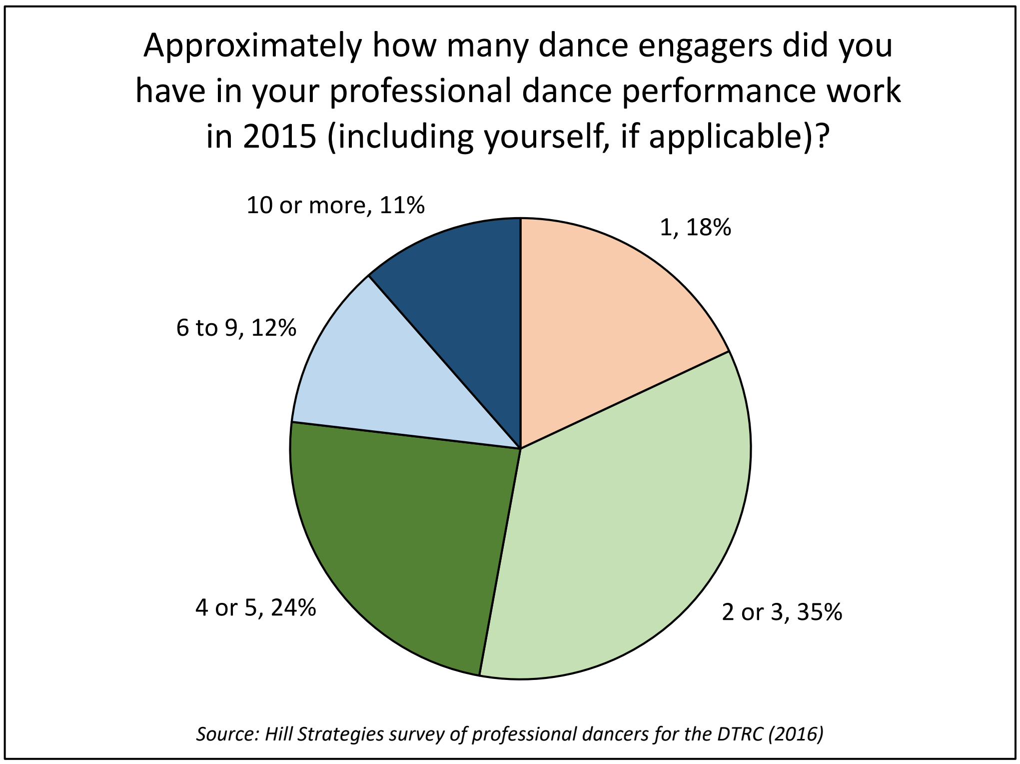
Figure 2



There are also varying realities regarding receiving direct payment for professional dance work. Only about one-half of responding dancers indicated that they were paid for "all or almost all" of their weeks worked in 2015 (52%). Another 16% of professional dancers were paid for the majority of their weeks worked, 11% were paid for about one-half of their weeks worked, and 21% were paid for less than one-half of their weeks worked.

Given the nature of the dance milieu, the survey used the term "engager" to refer to anyone who hired dancers to dance, be they a company, independent choreographer, collective, dancers themselves (as their own engager), etc. Typically, a professional dancer worked with about 3 dance engagers in 2015. However, as shown in Figure 3, nearly one-quarter of dancers had 6 or more engagers in 2015. (This is a substantial increase from the 11% of dancers who had 6 or more engagers in 2003/04.)

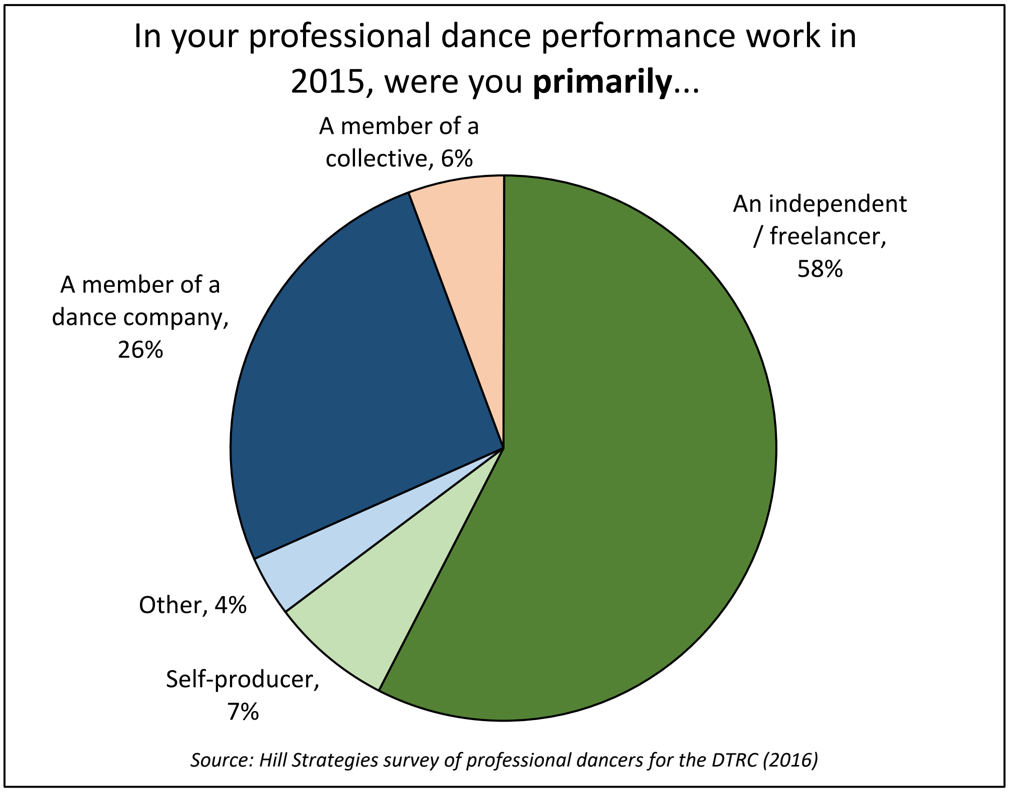
Figure 3



A large majority of respondents who danced professionally in 2015 were, at some point during the year, independent or freelance dancers (77%). At some point, 42% of professional dancers were members of a dance company, 30% self-produced, and 23% were members of a collective. (Because dancers could choose all applicable responses, the percentages add up to more than 100%.)

Figure 4 shows that a majority of respondents (58%) were **primarily** independent or freelance dancers in 2015.

Figure 4

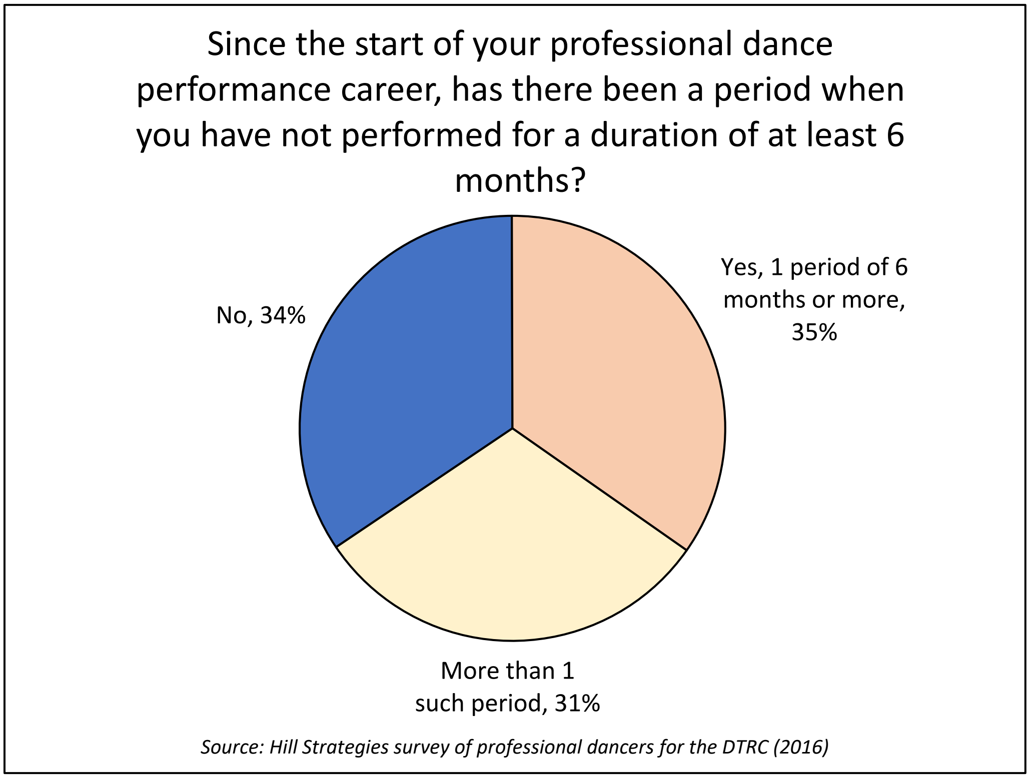


In terms of employment status, 77% of dance performers were primarily self-employed in 2015 (an increase from 58% in 2003/04). The other 23% of respondents were primarily employed.

Gaps in performance career

In addition to asking about dance activities in 2015, the survey also contained questions about gaps of six months or more in dancers' careers and the reasons for any such gap(s). As shown in Figure 5, two-thirds of dancers have had a performance gap of at least six months during their career, including 31% of dancers who have had more than one such period.

Figure 5

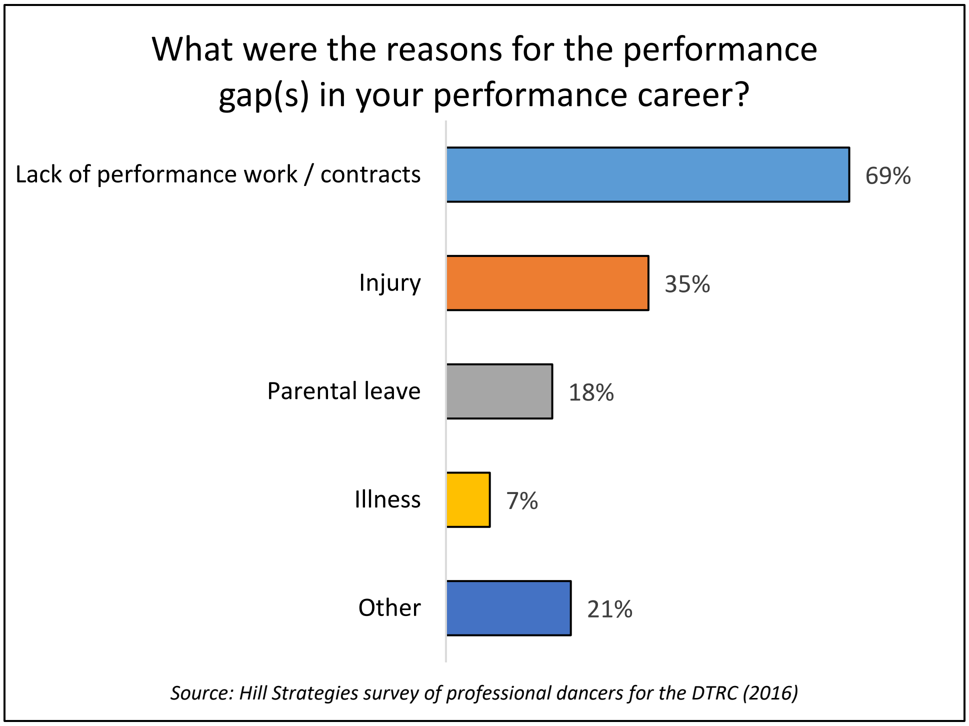


Dancers with at least one performance gap were asked what financial supports, if any, they had during the gap(s) in their performance careers. Not surprisingly, non-dance work was most common among dancers with performance gaps:

- Non-dance work: 73%
- Other dance-related work: 47%
- Personal savings or investments: 37%
- Relatives / friends: 34%
- Spouse / partner: 26%
- Employment insurance: 12%
- Workers' compensation (Quebec: CSST-CNESST): 6%
- Other government support (including social assistance, etc.): 5%
- The AFC (Actors' Fund of Canada) or Fondation des artistes: 3%
- Private health income plans: 1%

The most common reason for a gap in dancers' performance careers is lack of performance work or contracts, as presented in Figure 6. Injury is also relatively common.

Figure 6



Demographic and geographic characteristics of professional dancers

Professional dance is a field where women are in a strong majority: 80% of dancers responding to the DTRC questionnaire are female, 20% are male, and 0.4% (2 respondents) identified their gender as other.

The average age of professional dancers responding to the survey is 34, which is an increase from 2005, when the average age of survey respondents was 31. Among the respondents in 2016:

- 1% are 18 or 19 years old (down from 2% in 2005).
- 33% are in their twenties (down from 51% in 2005).
- 42% are in their thirties (up from 35% in 2005).
- 18% are in their forties (up from 9% in 2005).
- 6% are 50 or over (up from 3% in 2005).

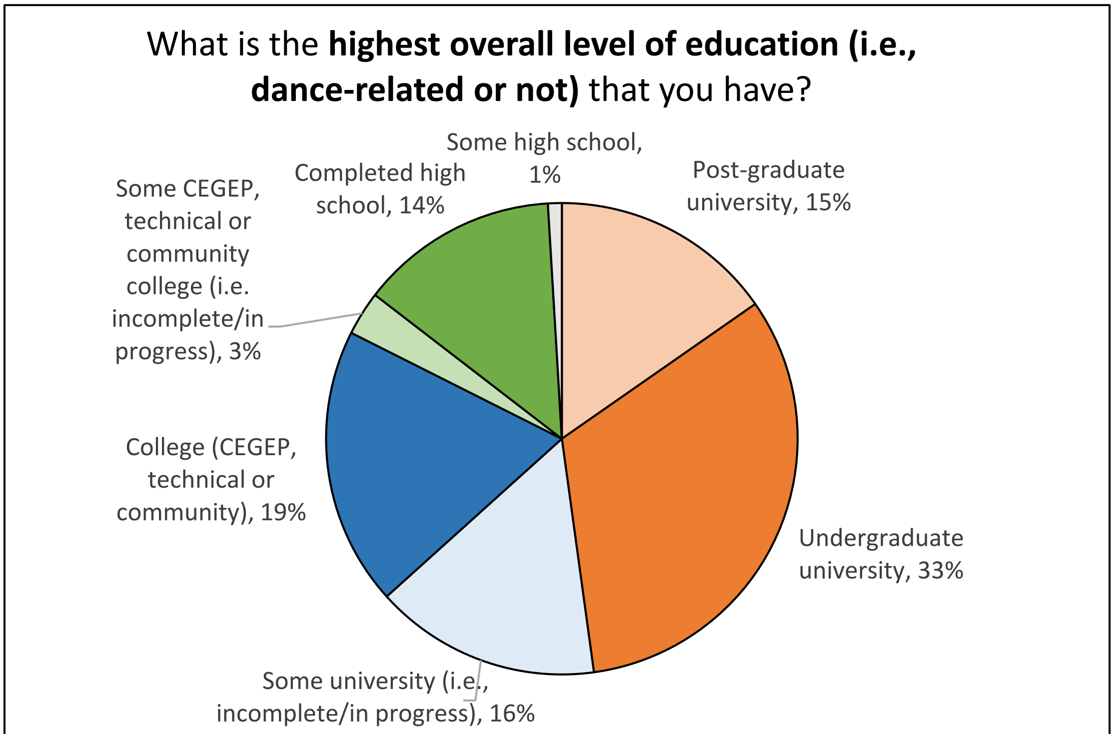
On average, dancers started their professional careers at age 20. Combined with the average age of 34, this means that respondents have, on average, 14 years of professional dance experience.

The 2016 survey found that 17% of professional dancers have at least one child, an increase from 10% in 2005.

Many dancers are highly educated: 67% have completed post-secondary studies, including 15% at the graduate university level, as shown in Figure 7. The proportion of dancers with post-secondary studies *in dance* is slightly smaller (57%).

The proportions of responding dancers with post-graduate and undergraduate university education have both increased since 2005 (from 10% to 15% and 27% to 33%, respectively). The proportion of respondents with a college education increased from 16% in 2005 to 19% in 2016.

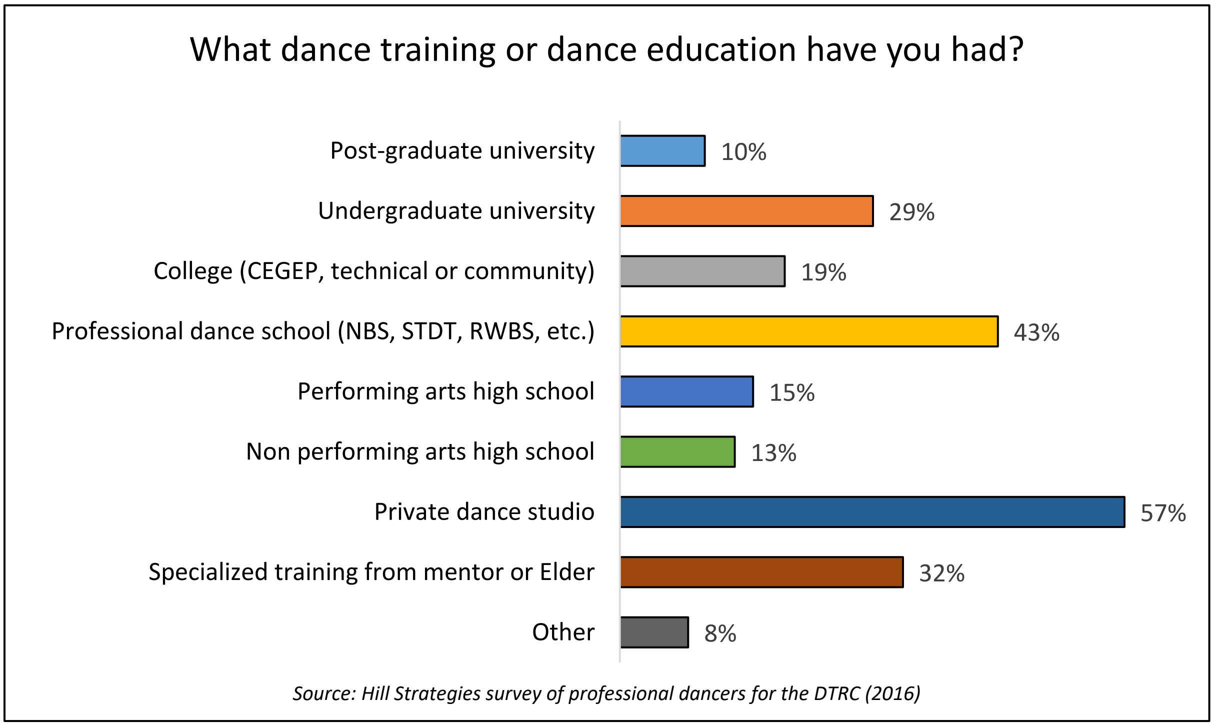
Figure 7



Source: Hill Strategies survey of professional dancers for the DTRC (2016)

Dancers also have a range of dance-specific training or education. Figure 8 shows that private dance studios are most common (57% of respondents), followed by professional dance schools (43%), specialized training from a mentor or Elder (32%), and undergraduate dance education (29%).

Figure 8

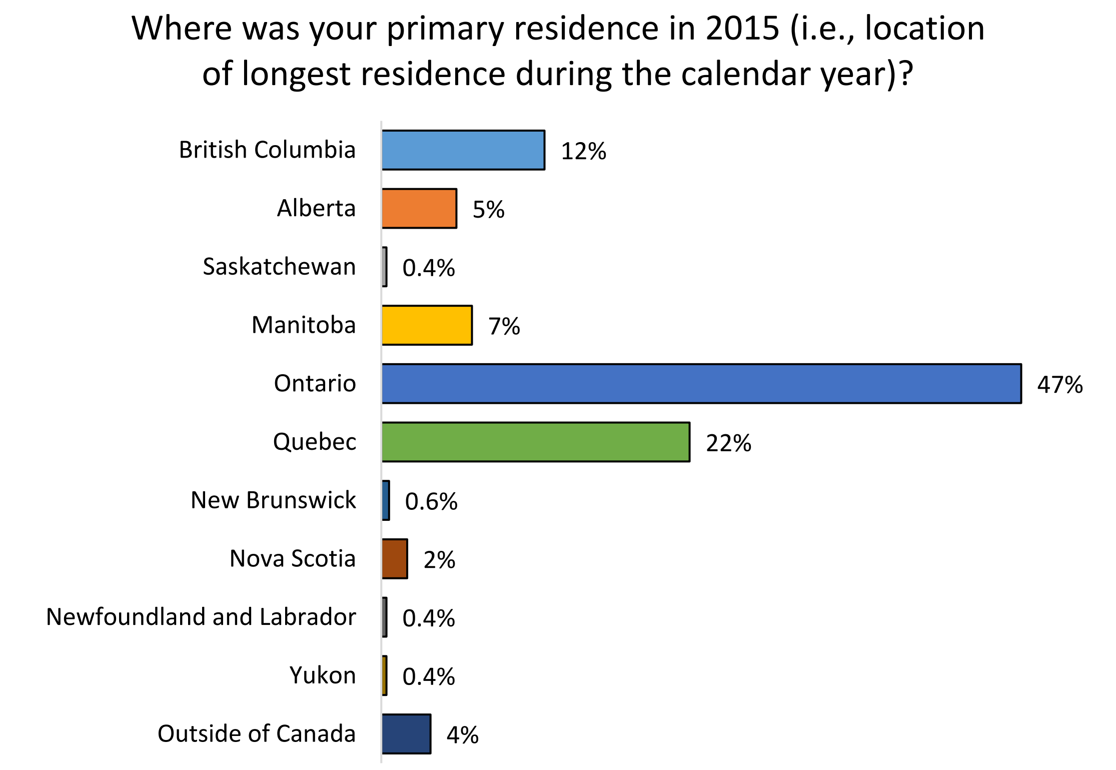


Residence and performance locations

Figure 9 shows the primary residence of survey respondents, who live in nine provinces and one territory as well as many locations outside of Canada, including the United States (12 respondents), Germany (3), and one each from France, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

While the proportion of Ontario dancers may seem high (47%), it is almost the same as the percentage of dancers in Ontario from the 2011 National Household Survey (46%).

Figure 9



Source: Hill Strategies survey of professional dancers for the DTRC (2016)

Given the mobility of many professional dance performers, the survey asked about the location of professional dance performances in 2015.

Table 1 reports the responses in three ways: 1) locations of dance contracts and/or artistic residencies; 2) touring performance locations; and 3) any dance performance activity in that jurisdiction (a combination of the first two columns). *(Note that some dancers selected each of the two columns in one jurisdiction but were only counted once in the third column, making the percentages in that column slightly lower than the sum of the other two columns. For example, 15% of responding dancers performed in B.C. through a dance contract or artistic residency. Another 12% danced in B.C. through touring performances. Overall, 24% of responding dancers performed in B.C., a number that is smaller than the sum of the other two columns because 3% of dancers performed in B.C. in both ways.)*

Two notable findings in Table 1 are that:

- Dancers performed in all 10 provinces and 3 territories in 2015 (third column).
- There is a very high level of "export" of Canadian dance talent, with 30% of dancers performing outside of Canada in 2015 (third column, final row).

Table 1: Location of dance performances in 2015	**Dance contract / artistic residency locations**	**Touring performances**	**Any dance performance activity in this jurisdiction** (i.e., either of the first two columns)
British Columbia	15%	12%	24%
Alberta	9%	9%	16%
Saskatchewan	2%	4%	5%
Manitoba	8%	4%	11%
Ontario	51%	22%	61%
Quebec	29%	15%	35%
New Brunswick	3%	6%	8%
Prince Edward Island	4%	5%	8%
Nova Scotia	1%	2%	3%
Newfoundland and Labrador	1%	3%	4%
Yukon	0.2%	0.8%	1.1%
Northwest Territories	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
Nunavut	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Outside of Canada	12%	24%	30%

Working lives and incomes in 2015

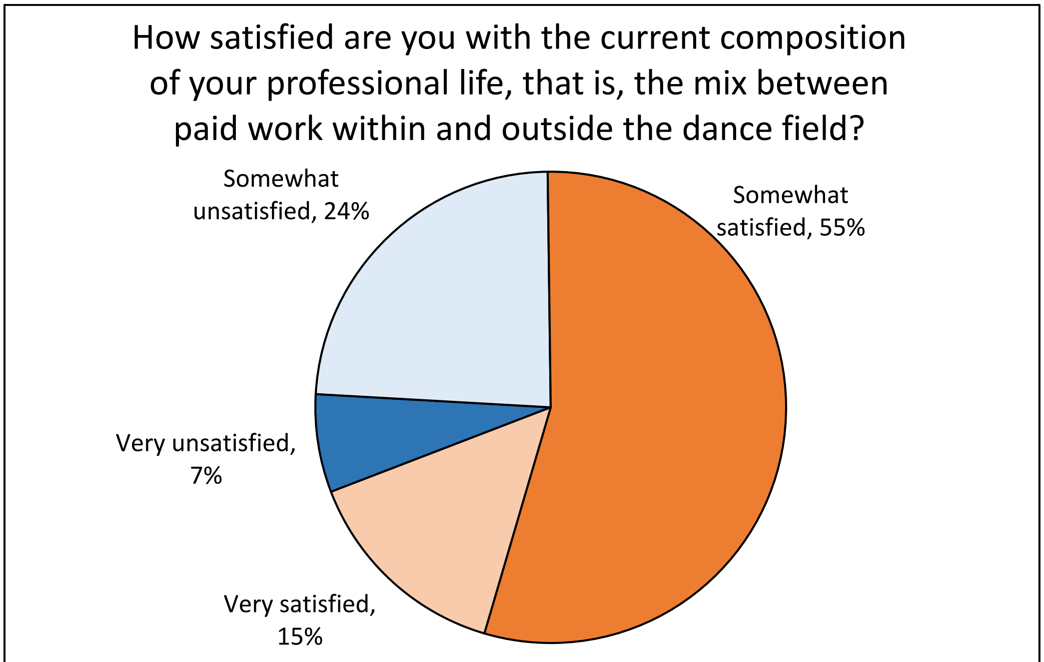
Many dancers' working lives are a delicate balance of dance performance, other dance work, and non-dance work. The survey asked dancers to estimate the percentage of their time spent and earnings received in 2015 in three categories. Table 2 shows that, on average, dancers spent the largest portion of their time on creation, rehearsal, and professional performance but received the largest portion of their earnings from non-dance work.

Table 2: Estimates of professional dancers' time and earnings from three key sources	**Average % of time**	**Average % of earnings**
Creation, rehearsal, and professional performance (including choreographic work only if it was for a piece in which the respondent performed)	40%	34%
All other dance work (including choreographic work for pieces in which respondents did not perform as well as dance teaching, administration, etc.)	32%	29%
Other work outside of dance	29%	36%

The survey referred to the balance of dance and non-dance work as a "portfolio career", which may be "comprised of a number of paid activities / work opportunities both within and outside the dance field". The survey asked dancers about their satisfaction with their current portfolio career mix.

As shown in Figure 10, about seven in ten dancers are either somewhat or very satisfied with their current career mix. On the other hand, 7% of dancers are very dissatisfied and another 24% somewhat dissatisfied with their current career mix.

Figure 10



Source: Hill Strategies survey of professional dancers for the DTRC (2016)

Gross earnings and sources of income

The survey asked dancers about their gross earnings (i.e., before accounting for any expenses or taxes) from three different areas:

1) Dance performance, which the survey defined as "creation, rehearsal and performance. For the purposes of this survey, include only those choreographic activities where you also performed in the work."
2) All dance-related activities.
3) All sources (i.e., dance and non-dance).

Gross earnings from dance performance activities were very low in 2015, with a median amount of about $7,000. (This question was not asked in 2005, so no historical comparison is possible.)

Only 2% of dancers earned more than $50,000 from dance performance activities in 2015:

- $5,000 or less: reported by 43% of respondents
- $5,001 to $10,000: 18%
- $10,001 to $15,000: 11%
- $15,001 to $20,000: 9%
- $20,001 to $25,000: 6%
- $25,001 to $30,000: 5%
- $30,001 to $40,000: 3%
- $40,001 to $50,000: 3%
- $50,001 to $75,000: 1%
- $75,001 to $100,000: 0.4%
- More than $100,000: 0.2% (only 1 respondent)

Note about median earnings

The median is a measure of the earnings of a "typical" dancer. Half of the dancers have earnings that are less than the median value, while the other half have earnings greater than the median. The median is less influenced than the average (more appropriately known as the "mean") by extreme observations (i.e., a few individuals reporting very large earnings). As a consequence, median earnings are often lower than average earnings.

Among survey respondents, the most common sources of dance performance earnings are:

- Fees for service (self-employment income or lump sum): selected by 81% of respondents
- Honoraria: 43%
- Wage or salary (from which contributions are deducted at source): 33%
- Grants to individuals (including public or private arts funders as well as community foundations): 22%
- Exchange of services: 18%
- Awards: 6%

Because dancers could choose all applicable responses, these percentages add up to more than 100%.

Professional dancers' median earnings from all dance-related sources were about $15,000 in 2015. This is the same median level as in 2003/04. After inflation, this would equate to a 21% decrease in professional dancers' median earnings from dance-related sources between 2003/04 and 2015.

Nearly one-quarter of dancers have dance-related earnings of $5,000 or less. Only 4% earn more than $50,000 from dance:

- $5,000 or less: 22%
- $5,001 to $10,000: 15%
- $10,001 to $15,000: 12%
- $15,001 to $20,000: 10%
- $20,001 to $25,000: 15%
- $25,001 to $30,000: 10%
- $30,001 to $40,000: 7%
- $40,001 to $50,000: 5%
- $50,001 to $75,000: 3%
- $75,001 to $100,000: 0.6% (3 respondents)
- More than $100,000: 0.2% (1 respondent)

The most common sources of dance-related earnings include:

- Dance performance: selected by 96% of dancers (similar to the 92% reporting in 2003/04)
- Dance teaching: 68% (up from 51% in 2003/04)
- Choreography: 53% (a major increase from 31% in 2003/04)
- Dance related administration / management: 22% (double the 2003/04 percentage of 11%)
- Rehearsal direction: 19% (similar to the 16% in 2003/04)
- Artistic direction: 17% (up from 11% in 2003/04)
- Choreographic consultant / dramaturge: 16% (not asked in 2003/04)
- Elder or mentor to another dance artist: 7% (not asked in 2003/04)
- Dance film / video director: 6% (not asked in 2003/04)
- Dance historian / researcher / writer: 3% (not comparable to 2003/04 wording)
- Stage management in dance: 3% (not asked in 2003/04)
- Dance notation: 1% (similar to the 0% in 2003/04)

Because dancers could choose all applicable responses, these percentages add up to more than 100%.

Many professional dancers also earn income from a variety of non-dance related sources, including:

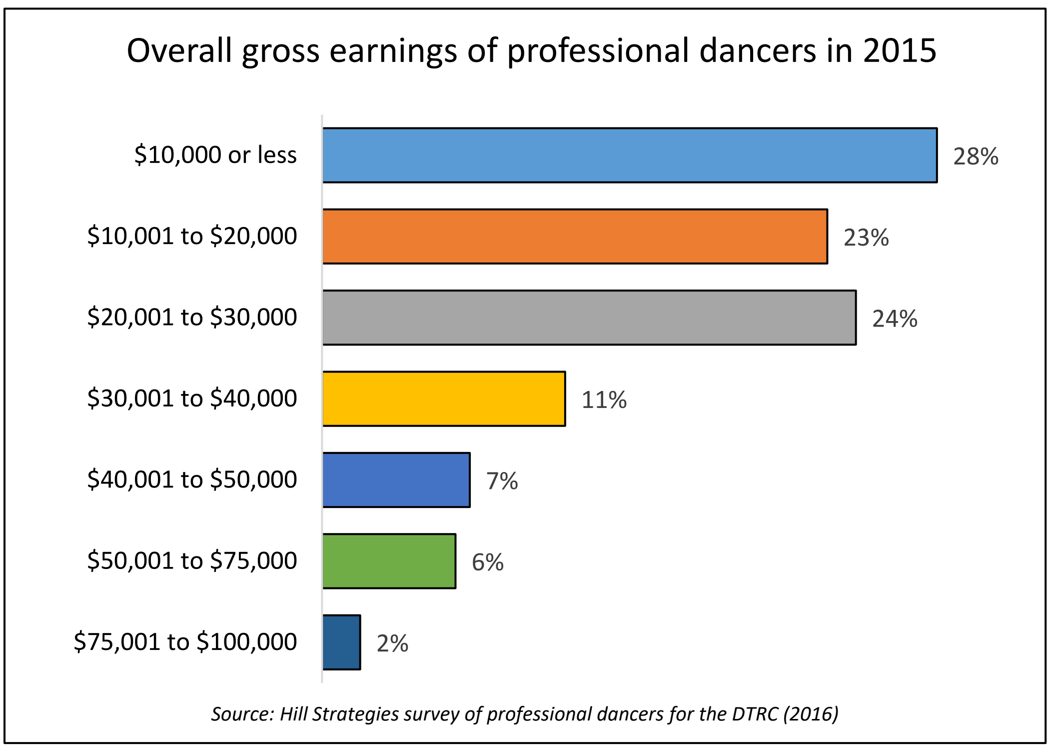
- Non-dance related employment or self-employment: selected by 81% of respondents
- Educational scholarships, bursaries, or grants (excluding student loans): 14%
- Employment insurance: 8%
- Other government support (including social assistance, etc.): 5%
- Workers' compensation or other work related plans: 2%
- Private health income plans: 1%

Because dancers could choose all applicable responses, these percentages add up to more than 100%.

In 2015, dancers' median earnings from all sources were $20,000, which is a very small increase from $18,900 in 2003/04. Once inflation is taken into account, dancers' median earnings actually decreased by 13%, from an adjusted median of $22,900 in 2003/04 to $20,000 in 2015.

As presented in Figure 11, a large proportion of dancers had low overall earnings in 2015.

Figure 11



Median earnings for all Canadian workers were $32,800 in 2014 (the most recent year available).[1] Professional dancers' overall median earnings are 39% less than this figure.

The survey asked dancers about any other financial supports they received in 2015 that would not have been included in overall earnings. The largest contingent of dancers (33%) reported no other sources of financial support. Given the typically low earnings of dancers, many rely on the support of their relatives and friends and/or their spouses or partners:

- Relatives or friends: reported by 30% of dancers
- Spouse / partner: 24%
- Personal savings or investments: 19%
- Student loan: 7%
- DTRC programs: 7%
- Personal loan (excluding mortgage): 2%

Dancers could choose all applicable responses in this question.

As shown in the statistics above, one in every five dancers (19%) drew upon their own personal savings or investments to make ends meet in 2015. However, many dancers do not have personal savings or investments to rely on: 43% of dancers do not have $5,000 in savings (in an RRSP, TFSA, etc.).

The reliance upon other financial supports appears to be an ongoing issue for a substantial proportion of professional dancers: the above percentages are quite similar to the findings from the 2005 DTRC survey.

[1] Source: *Canadian Income Survey, 2014*, Statistics Canada, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/160708/dq160708b-eng.htm, accessed September 20, 2016.

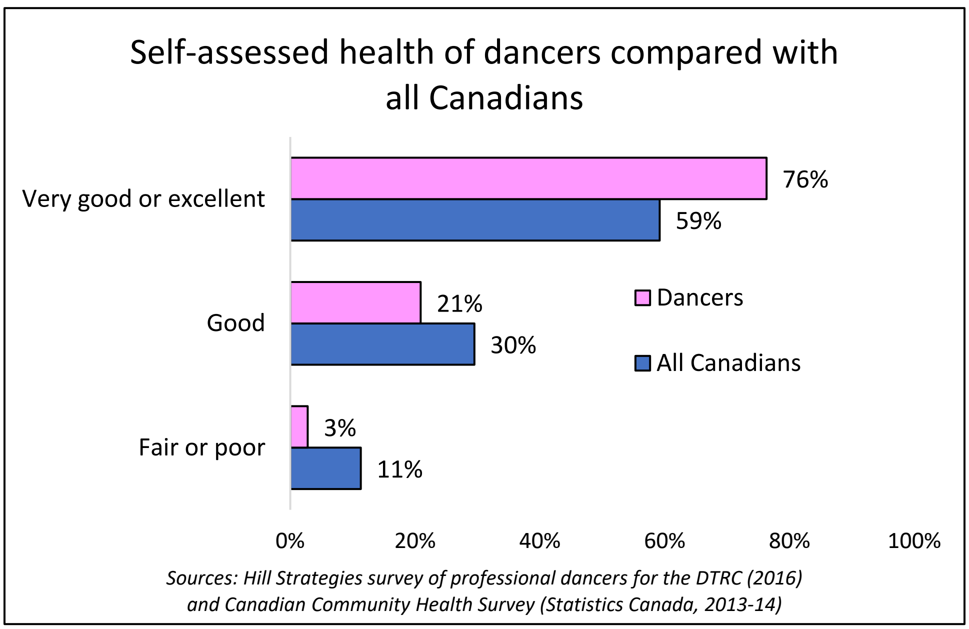
Health and well-being of professional dance performers

As a demanding physical and mental undertaking, professional dance requires very strong fitness and health, as well as similarly high levels of concentration and mental strength. Three survey questions allow for a comparison of the health and well-being of dancers with all Canadians.

The first of these questions addressed general health, with 28% of dancers indicating that their health is "excellent" and another 48% indicating "very good". One in five dancers rated their health as "good" (21%), and only 3% indicated that their health is fair. No dancers rated their own 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 12 indicates that these self-assessed health ratings are much higher than those in the overall Canadian population.[2]

Figure 12

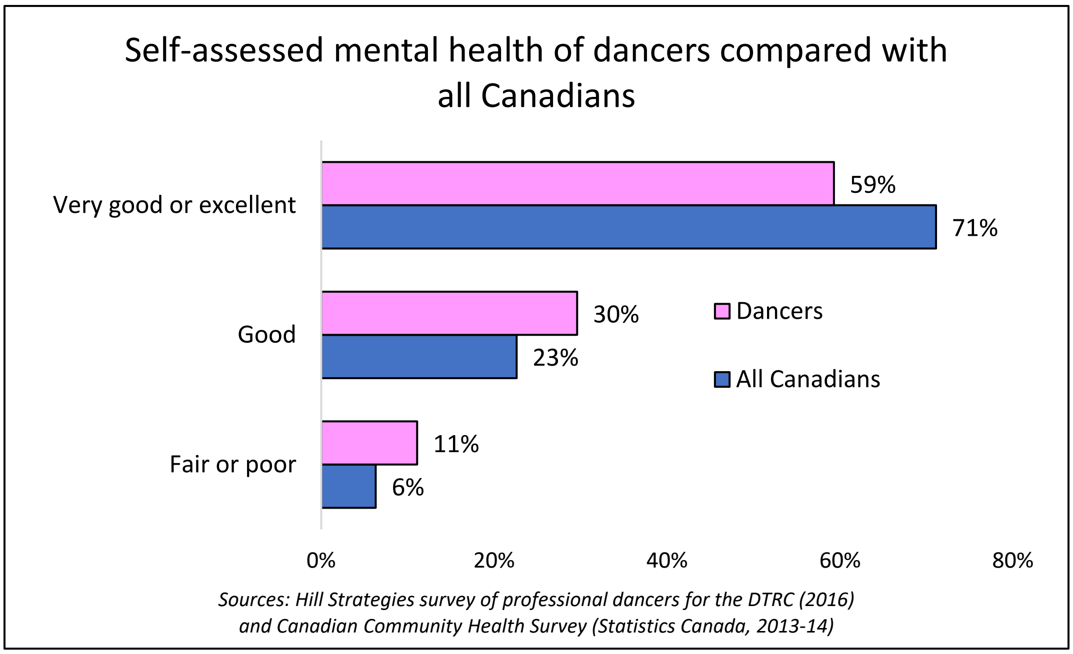


[2] Data on the health and mental health of all Canadians are drawn from the *Canadian Community Health Survey* of 2013-14, Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 105-0502, http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a05?lang=eng&id=01050502, accessed September 21, 2016.

A somewhat different picture emerges regarding dancers' mental health. Dancers rated their own mental health somewhat lower than their overall health, with self-assessed mental health rated as excellent by 18% of dancers, very good by 41%, good by 30%, fair by 9%, and poor by 2%.

As shown in Figure 13, dancers' ratings of their own mental health are much lower than the self-assessments of other Canadians.

Figure 13



A third question asked dancers about their overall satisfaction with life: "Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'Very dissatisfied' and 10 means 'Very satisfied', how do you feel about your life as a whole right now?" On average, dancers rated their satisfaction with life as 7.44, which is below the average of 7.95 for all Canadians.[3]

Hill Strategies Research clustered the responses for dancers and the general public into four groups. Table 3 shows that a higher proportion of dancers than other Canadians are in two lower groups (i.e., ratings of 7 or less) and a lower proportion of dancers than other Canadians are in the highest group (9 or 10).

Table 3: Ratings of satisfaction with life, dancers and all Canadians	% of dancers	% of all Canadians
6 or lower	22%	14%
7	23%	17%
8	31%	32%
9 or 10	24%	37%

Extended health coverage, unions, and workers' compensation

About one-third of dancers (35%) have extended health care coverage. Spouses and partners are the most common means of obtaining extended health coverage:

- Spouse or partner (including their union or employer): selected by 31% of dancers
- Dance performing work: 20%
- Arts-related union: 17%
- Your own contributions: 17%
- Non-arts employer or union: 16%
- Other dance-related work: 6%
- Arts service organization: 5%
- Arts-related work outside of dance: 4%
- Other: 11%

Because dancers could choose all applicable responses, these percentages add up to more than 100%.

Only 29% of dancers worked in a unionized environment at any point in 2015, while even fewer (23%) work in an environment where they are covered by workers' compensation.

[3] 7.95 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.

Career development and transitions

Dancers were asked questions about their career development and transitions in order to help the DTRC understand their needs throughout their career. The survey indicated that career development is a "lifelong process of managing learning, work, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving future".

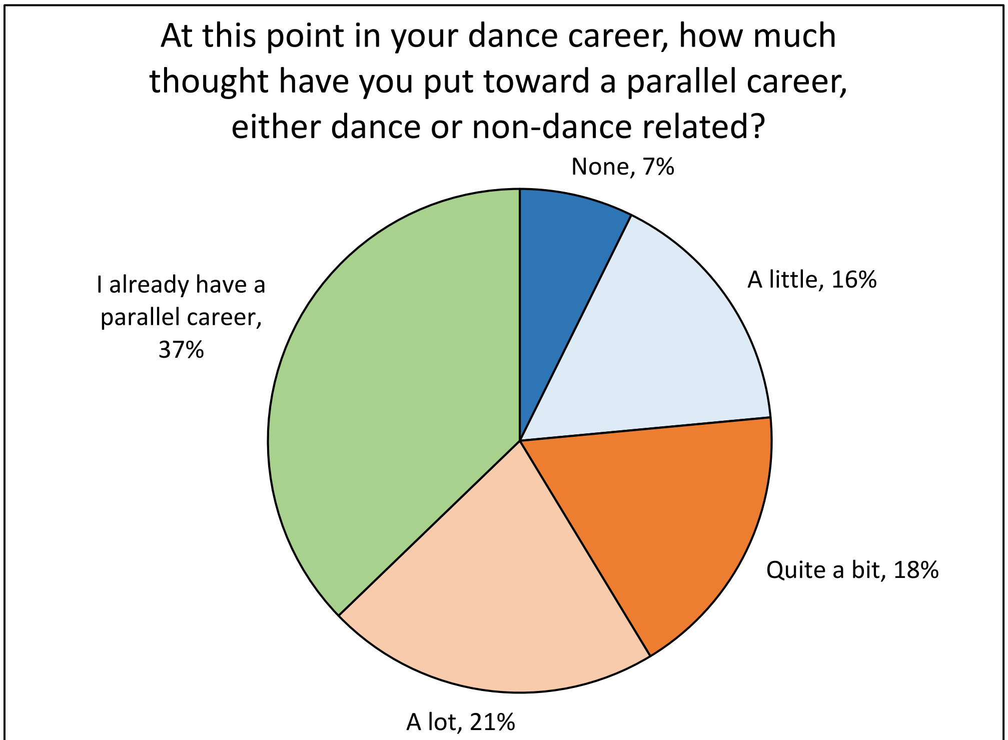
Parallel careers

The survey provided dancers with a definition of "parallel" careers:

> *Many dancers undertake what this survey calls a "parallel" career while still performing, i.e., something that they pursue as another professional interest. This may be for personal, financial or professional reasons.*

At the current point in their careers, very few dancers (7%) have put no thought at all toward a parallel career. In fact, the largest contingent of dancers (37%) already have a parallel career. Figure 14 provides full details regarding dancers' preparedness for parallel careers.

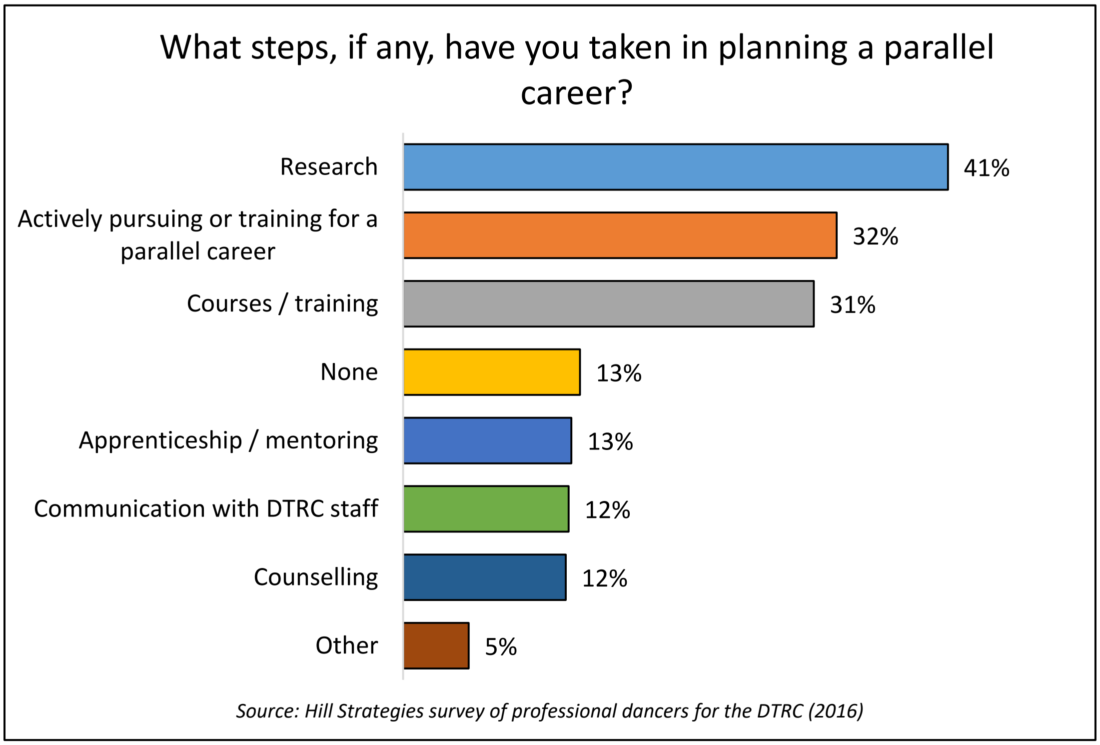
Figure 14



Source: Hill Strategies survey of professional dancers for the DTRC (2016)

In terms of the steps taken in planning a parallel career, Figure 15 shows that research is most common (selected by 41% of dancers). One-third of dancers (32%) are actively pursuing or training for a parallel career, while 31% have taken courses or training.

Figure 15



(These percentages add up to more than 100% because dancers could select all the steps that they have taken.)

Dancers’ preparations for second careers

Professional dancers have a wide range of expectations in terms of when they might conclude their professional dance performance career. The median expected age of transition away from professional dance performance is 45, which is higher than the median of 40 in 2005.

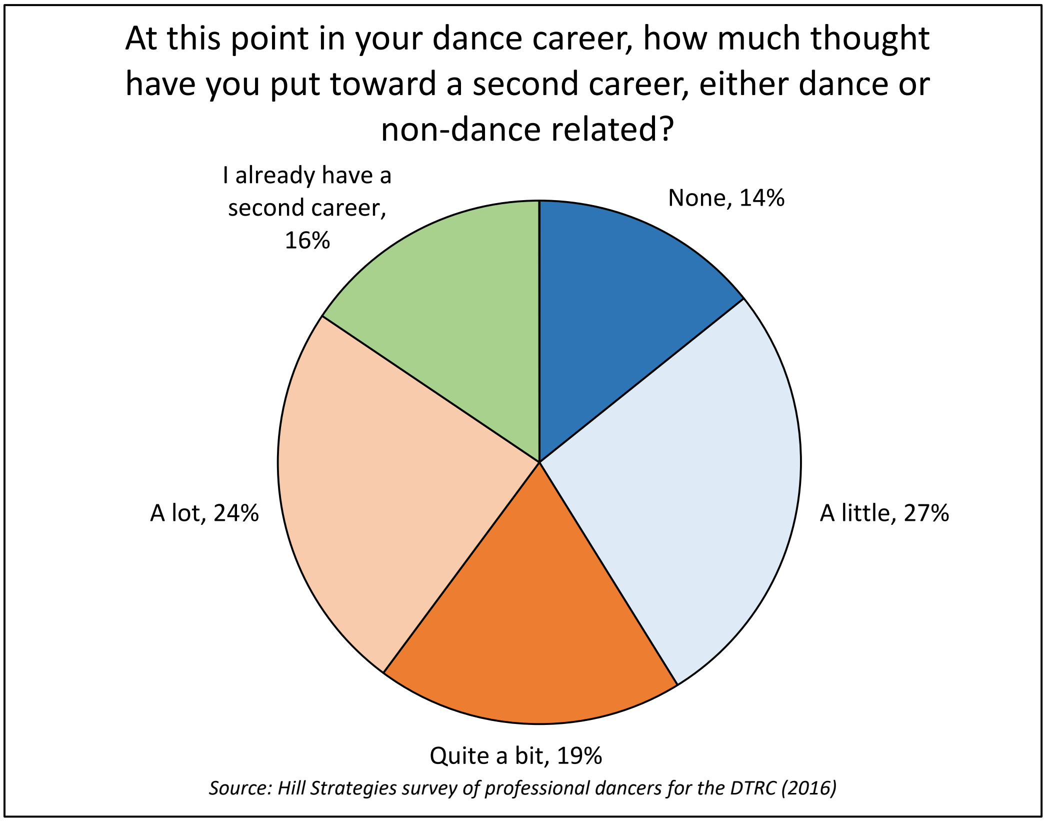
In 2015, the most common single response was 40 (mentioned by 13% of dancers). However, nearly one-half of dancers indicated an age of 50 or older (48%). In fact, a fairly large number of dancers (13%) entered 80 or older as their expected age of transition away from professional dance performance. (Because respondents were forced to enter a numerical value, these responses could be considered “never”.)

Table 4 shows that dancers’ expectations for career longevity have increased since 2005, with many more dancers now expecting to stop their professional dance performance career in their forties or beyond fifty years of age.

Table 4: Age of expected conclusion of performance career	% in 2005	% in 2016
Twenties	3%	3%
Thirties	44%	23%
Forties	19%	26%
Fifty or older (including "never" in 2005)	35%	48%

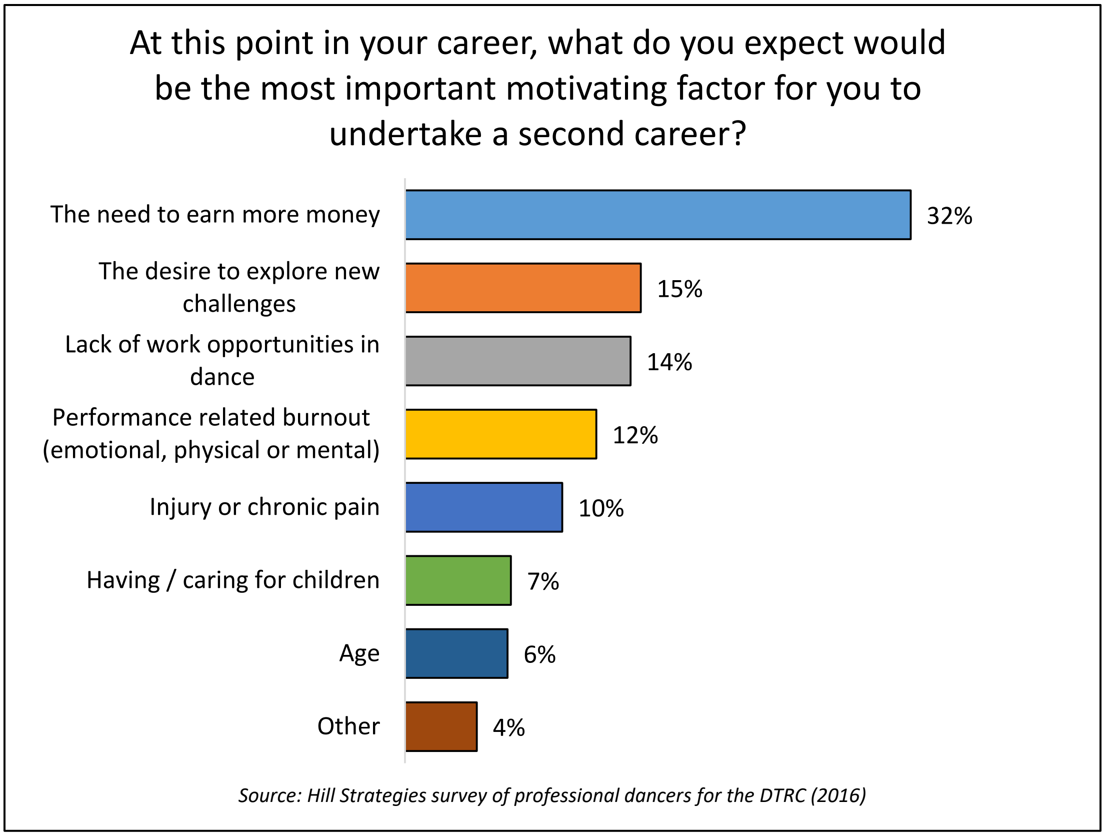
The survey defined a second career as “a career after dance performance has ceased to be your major career focus”. As indicated in Figure 16, relatively few dancers (14%) have put no thought at all toward a second career. About one-quarter of dancers have put “a little” thought toward a second career (27%), and a similar proportion (24%) have put “a lot” of thought toward it.

Figure 16



Many factors might motivate dancers to undertake a second career, and "the need to earn more money" was by far the most common motivation cited by survey respondents, as presented in Figure 17.

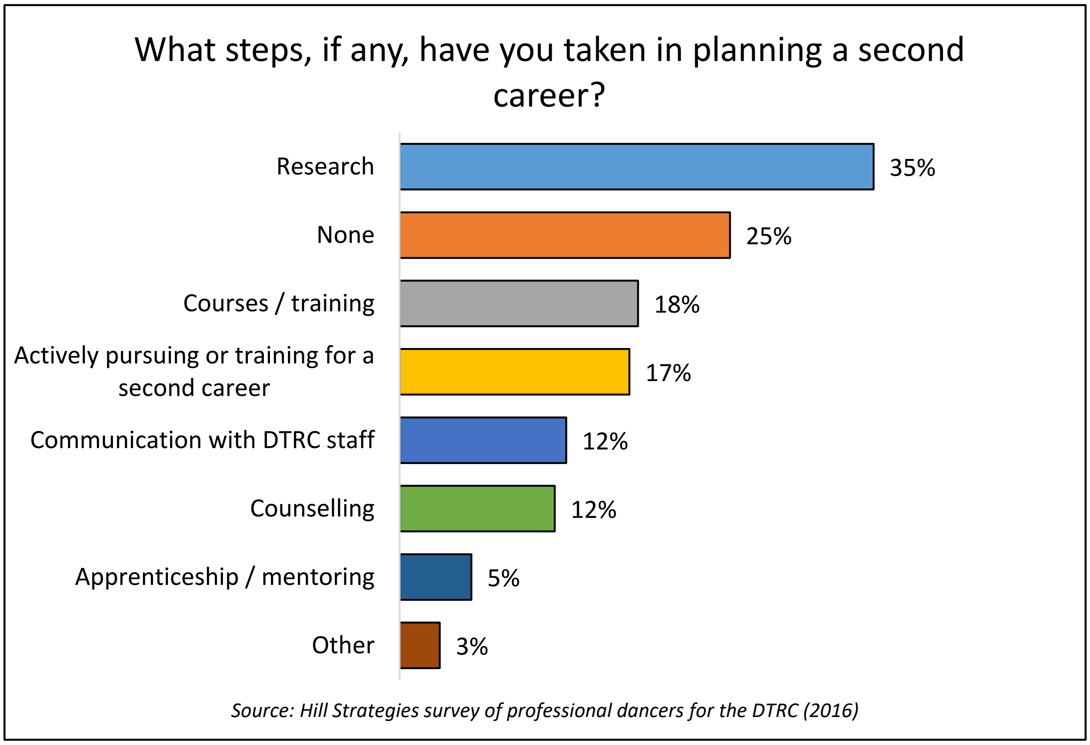
Figure 17



(Dancers were allowed only one response to this question.)

Regarding steps taken in planning a second career, Figure 18 shows that one in four dancers have not taken any steps toward planning a second career. For those who have taken steps in planning, research is most common (35%).

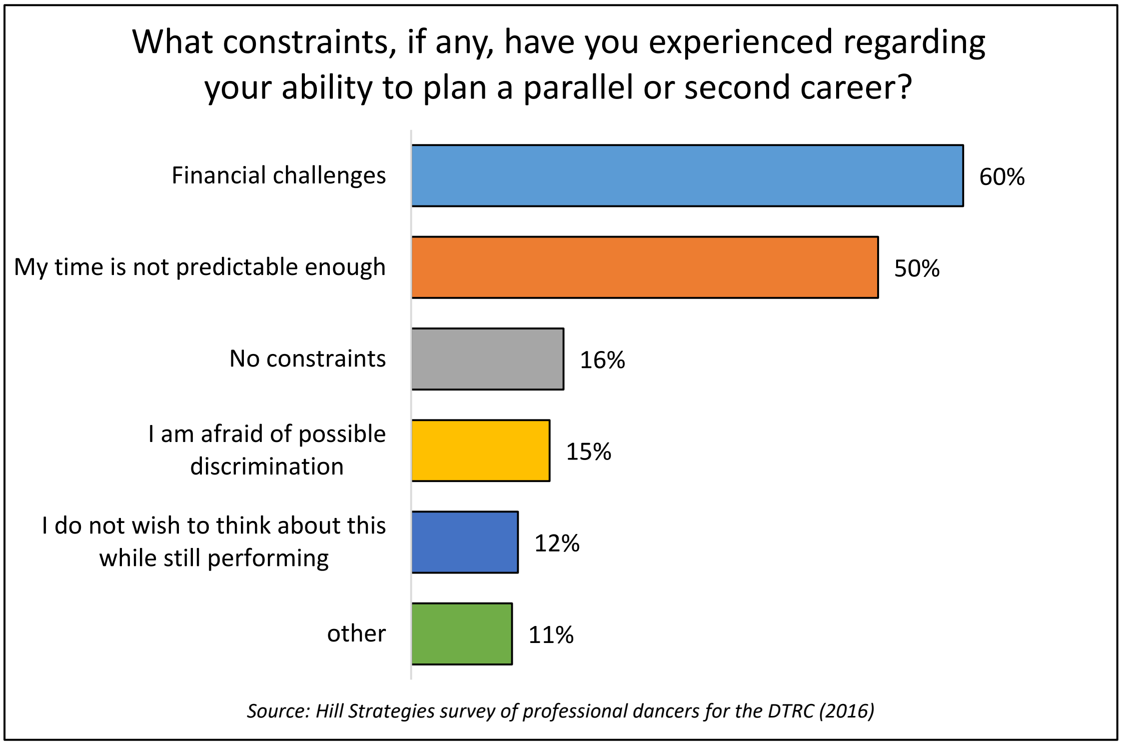
Figure 18



(These percentages add up to more than 100% because dancers could select all the steps that they have taken.)

Dancers were asked whether they had experienced any constraints on their ability to plan a parallel or second career. Figure 19 shows that financial constraints and the unpredictability of dancers' time are by far the most common constraints.

Figure 19

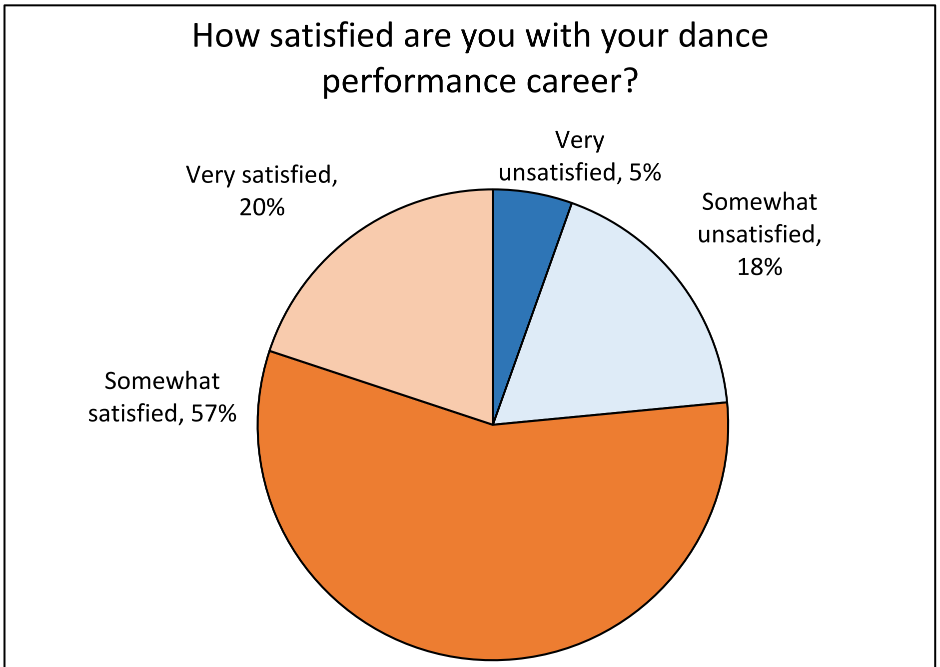


(These percentages add up to more than 100% because dancers could select all constraints that apply to them.)

Satisfaction with dance performance career

Regarding their overall satisfaction with their dance performance career, about three-quarters of professional dancers are either somewhat or very satisfied with their dance performance career, but 23% of dancers are either very or somewhat dissatisfied with their dance performance career (see Figure 20).

Figure 20



Source: Hill Strategies survey of professional dancers for the DTRC (2016)

Skills development

Dancers were asked to rank the types of skills or knowledge that could be helpful in their career development. Key professional development needs, as shown in Table 5, include choreography or creation, dance technique, and networking.

Table 5: Dancers' professional development needs	% ranking as #1 need	% including in top 5 needs
Choreography / creation	25%	64%
Dance technique	14%	47%
Networking	13%	67%
Marketing / public relations	8%	51%
Financial literacy	7%	41%
Leadership	7%	35%
Effective writing	6%	43%
Contract negotiation	6%	41%
Digital technologies	5%	32%
Interpersonal communication	5%	30%
Musicality	0.4%	15%
Other	3%	10%

Looking toward the future

Regarding their professional future, dancers were asked for a few words explaining what comes to mind when prompted by the phrase "Thinking about my professional future makes me feel …". Hill Strategies Research identified keywords mentioned by respondents, including translation of French words and matching to English equivalents. Almost all keywords fell clearly into one of two simple categories: positive and negative words. Comments that included both positive and negative words were included in both categories. A few comments (6% of all responses) were neither distinctly positive nor negative and were not grouped into any category.

Overall, negative words represented 58% of all keywords counted. By far, the most common word was a positive one ("excited"). However, the next three most common keywords were "uncertain", "anxious", and "nervous". Table 6 lists the 16 words that were mentioned by at least 2% of the 439 dancers who provided comments.

Table 6: Most common keywords in dancers' comments regarding their professional future	% of dancers
excited	22%
uncertain	12%
anxious	11%
nervous	8%
hopeful	7%
worried	5%
stressed	5%
scared	4%
curious	3%
unsure	3%
optimistic	3%
concerned	2%
confused	2%
insecure	2%
inspired	2%
sad	2%

DTRC's concluding remarks

Note: This section was prepared by the DTRC, unlike the rest of the report, which was written by Kelly Hill of Hill Strategies Research (with review and comments from the DTRC).

As a dance service organization that strives to meet the ever changing needs of our members and the greater dance community, the DTRC was eager for the results of this survey in light of trends we have observed within dance careers in the past decade.

Results demonstrate that the structure of a dance career has changed substantially since our last survey in 2005, with more dancers working independently as freelancers – 77% of dancers are now self-employed, an increase from 58% – and working with an increasing number of engagers (the percentage of dancers who worked with more than six engagers in 2015 is more than double that of 2004). This is a situation that lends itself to high mobility for dancers, with increasing dance activity across provincial borders, as well as internationally.

While the number of employment contexts that individual dancers encounter is greater than in the past, the median number of weeks spent predominantly in rehearsal of performance is only 20. It is not surprising to us that so many dancers (38%) currently maintain other careers in parallel to their performance career. The large number of dancers who have completed higher education (both inside and outside of dance) and are maintaining parallel careers is a positive development in regards to helping dancers sustain their careers and ease post-performance transition.

Even with these additional income sources, however, we are dismayed to see that overall incomes (a median income of $20,000) is 13% lower than the 2004 reported income, once adjusted for inflation. In fact, 32% of surveyed dancers now report "the need to make more money" would be the most important motivating factor to leave performance and undertake training for a 'second' career.

Dancers today expect to keep dancing longer than in previous decades, with 48% of survey respondents expecting to continue dancing beyond the age of 50. However, while expectations around longevity have changed, reality shows a different story, with the average age of dancers applying to the DTRC for post-performance retraining support being 37.5*.

Yet, despite the increasing financial strain and precarity of work in the field, 57% of dancers are somewhat satisfied with their performance career and 20% are very satisfied.

**Based on post-performance retraining support applications received from DTRC members between 2007 and 2016*