

# Sound recording and music publishing, 2021

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Tuesday, March 28, 2023

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## Canada's sound recording industries continue strong growth in 2021

The record production and distribution and music publishers industries posted strong growth from 2019 to 2021. While the COVID-19 pandemic [significantly affected musical groups and artists](#), it did little to slow growth in the sound recording industries. In fact, these industries may have benefitted from changing consumer behaviour during the pandemic, which included increased demand for streaming, one of the main drivers of growth.

### Record production and distribution

Operating revenue in the record production and distribution industry grew to \$728.1 million in 2021, an increase of 16.7% from 2019. Streaming sales reached \$407.0 million, up 28.6% over the same period.

Growth in record production and distribution was concentrated among large foreign-controlled companies operating in Canada, which saw their total sales of recordings grow from \$362.6 million in 2019 to \$460.7 million in 2021. Meanwhile, independent Canadian-controlled record production and distribution companies experienced a decline in total recording sales, from \$93.5 million in 2019 to \$88.1 million in 2021.

While streaming sales continued their strong growth, in 2021 compact disc sales were down 30.4% from 2019, and sales from digital downloads declined for both albums (-31.8%) and singles (-34.0%). However, sales for other formats, which include vinyl records, increased to \$67.8 million in 2021. Renewed popularity of vinyl records was reported by many in the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Canada, evidence shows that [much of the rapid growth occurred in 2021](#).

### Music publishers

For music publishers, pandemic-related restrictions likely reduced demand, at least temporarily, for licensed music in certain venues, including large public events, malls and sporting events. Nonetheless, operating revenues rose 16.0% from 2019 to 2021, to \$449.3 million. The industry has diverse revenue streams, including revenue from the public performance of licensed music through various media (for example, online, radio), as well as royalties for the reproduction of copyrighted musical works and the placement of musical works in film, television and commercials.

### Sound recording studios

Sound recording studios earned operating revenue of \$146.2 million in 2021, an increase of 1.4% from 2019, comparatively weaker than the growth seen in the other sound recording industries. Recording studios were most directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of restrictions on non-essential businesses, many studios cancelled or delayed projects, including live recording sessions with artists. By contrast, studios engaged in remote work that does not involve live recording were better positioned to operate throughout the pandemic.

Some studios also specialize in providing audio post-production services for the film and television industries, and delays in film production inevitably resulted in postponements for the studios that service the film industry as well.

### Future trends for the sound recording industries

Growth trends in the record production and distribution and music publishers industries are expected to continue. Although sound recording studios were the most affected by the pandemic, they should benefit as [the film production industry tackles the backlog of projects that had been put on hold](#). Detailed financial statistics for these industries for 2023 will be provided following survey data collection in 2024.



### Note to readers

The Survey of Service Industries: Sound Recording and Music Publishing is conducted every two years and covers North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 5122, sound recording industries. These include the following four industries: music publishers (NAICS 51223), sound recording studios (NAICS 51224), record production and distribution (NAICS 51225), and other sound recording industries (NAICS 51229).

For musical groups and artists (NAICS 71113), see [Survey of Service Industries: Performing Arts](#).

Data for 2017 and 2019 have been revised.

These and other data related to the culture, arts, heritage and sports sector can be found at the [Culture statistics](#) portal.

The [Arts and Culture Data Viewer](#)—a new interactive tool that allows users to easily break down economic and social data from Statistics Canada on arts and culture by geographic area and other dimensions—is now available.

**Available tables:** [21-10-0055-01](#), [21-10-0056-01](#), [21-10-0080-01](#), [21-10-0083-01](#), [21-10-0084-01](#) and [21-10-0271-01](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** survey number [3115](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).