

Graduating in Canada: Profile, labour market outcomes and student debt of the class of 2009/2010, 2013

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In 2009/2010, 4 in 10 graduates chose to continue their postsecondary education after graduating from their program. A new study based on data from the 2013 National Graduates Survey (class of 2009/2010) found that bachelor graduates (49%) were the most likely to have pursued further education, followed by college graduates (35%), master's graduates (32%) and earned doctorate graduates (16%).

Among those who did not pursue further studies, 90% of college graduates, 92% of bachelor and master's graduates and 93% of doctorate graduates had found employment by 2013, three years after completing their program in 2009/2010.

Graduates from fields of study that are associated with lower employment rates are more likely to pursue further education

The study revealed that there may be a relationship between employment rates and the proportion of graduates who returned to school after graduation by field of study.

There are many reasons a graduate may return to school, including increasing educational requirements to meet demand from employers, personal interest or difficulties in the labour market.

While, overall, almost half of bachelor graduates pursued further studies, this proportion was much higher for graduates from a number of fields of study. Biological and biomedical sciences (77%) saw the highest proportion of graduates continue their education, followed by psychology (75%), mathematics and statistics (71%), physical and life sciences and technologies (70%) and humanities (61%). In turn, the employment rates for bachelor graduates in these fields of study were lower, ranging from 84% to 90%. That compares with 92% at the bachelor level overall.

Earnings rise with each education level

The results of the study show that while relatively similar proportions of college, bachelor, master's and doctorate graduates were able to find work three years after graduation, there were differences in terms of their earnings.

The median annual earnings among those who were working full time in 2013 were lowest for college graduates at \$41,600. This increased to \$53,000 for bachelor graduates, \$70,000 for master's graduates and \$75,000 for doctorate graduates. Doctorate graduates not working in postdoctorate positions (\$82,000) earned substantially more, on average, than those working in postdoctorate positions (\$50,000), which are temporary positions primarily used for gaining additional education and training in research.

At each level of education, male full-time workers earned more than their female counterparts. The gender difference was least pronounced among doctorate graduates, where female doctorate holders earned \$1,800 or 2% less than men.

Master's and doctorate graduates more likely to report that their job matches their education

One of the measures of job quality in the National Graduates Survey is the extent to which graduates described their occupation held during the reference week in 2013 as related to their qualification completed in 2009/2010.

A similar proportion of college graduates (81%) and bachelor graduates (80%) reported a 'close' or 'somewhat close' relationship between their job and their education. For master's graduates, 92% reported their job was 'closely' or 'somewhat' related to their education, while for doctorate holders, it was 96%.



This link between education and job also varied by field of study. At the college level, a higher proportion of graduates in a number of fields of study reported that their job was 'closely' or 'somewhat' related to their education. The list included health, parks, recreation and fitness (88%), education (88%), social and behavioural sciences and law (86%) and architecture, engineering and related technologies (83%).

At the bachelor level, the proportion of graduates who reported the highest match (closely or somewhat related) were in the primary field of study groups health, parks, recreation and fitness (94%), architecture, engineering and related technologies (93%) and mathematics, computer and information sciences (90%).

Student debt

At the time of graduation, 43% of college graduates, 50% of bachelor graduates, 44% of master's and 41% of doctorate graduates relied on government or non-government student loans, which include private, family and bank loans, to help finance their education.

Among the 2009/2010 cohort with student debt to any source, college graduates owed the least at \$14,900. Student loans for both bachelor and master's graduates were just over \$26,000, while doctorate graduates owed an average of \$41,100 at the time of graduation.

In 2013, three years after graduation, across all levels of education, at least one-third of graduates with student debt had paid off their student loans. This proportion was lowest among bachelor graduates (34%), similar for college and doctorate graduates (36%) and highest for master's graduates (44%).

Note to readers

The National Graduates Survey (NGS) 2013 was conducted in the spring/summer of 2013 and collected information on graduates from public postsecondary institutions in Canada, focusing on employment, labour market outcomes and student debt.

The 2013 NGS, class of 2009/2010, was conducted three years after graduation, whereas previous NGSs were conducted two years after graduation. While information on graduates at the time of graduation is comparable across cycles, information on graduates' activities at the time of the interview is not directly comparable. For example, labour market outcomes and debt repayment pertain to status three years after graduation for the 2013 NGS compared with two years after graduation for other cycles of NGS.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5012](#).

The report "Graduating in Canada: Profile, Labour Market Outcomes and Student Debt of the Class of 2009-2010" is now available as part of *Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education: Research Papers (81-595-M)*. From the *Browse by key resource* module of our website choose *Publications*.

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