

Elementary–Secondary Education Survey for Canada, the provinces and territories, 2017/2018

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Over 5.6 million students in Canada were enrolled in elementary and secondary school programs in 2017/2018. Students can be attending public schools, private/independent schools, or they can be home-schooled.

In the same school year, almost 380,000 students graduated from Canadian high schools.

Over 5.6 million students enrolled in elementary and secondary school programs

The number of students in Canada's elementary–secondary programs totalled 5,609,007 in 2017/2018. Children in Canada are required by law to attend school from the age of 5 or 6 until the age of 16 or 18, depending on the province/territory. Variations in the total enrolment counts reflect fluctuations in the school-aged population.

To explore enrolment data in a visual format, visit the "[Elementary–secondary school enrolments: Interactive tool.](#)"

Vast majority of students attend public schools

The vast majority of students (92.0%) attended public schools in 2017/2018, and their number was up 0.8% from the previous school year. This increase aligns with an estimated 0.9% increase in the population of 5- to 18-year-olds during the same period.

In the same school year, 7.4% of students attended private/independent schools in Canada. British Columbia (13.1%) and Quebec (9.6%) had the highest proportion of their students attending these schools.

In the Elementary-Secondary Education Survey (ESES), private/independent schools are defined on the basis of governance by private individuals and/or groups rather than source of funding. The schools included in the private/independent school sector vary across jurisdictions. For example, in Manitoba, Catholic schools are included in this sector while in other provinces and territories they are not.

Enrolments in private/independent schools have been steadily increasing in recent years, rising 3.2% from 2016/2017 to 2017/2018. During this period, private/independent school enrolments increased in all provinces.

As a result of a higher rate of growth in the private/independent sector compared with the public sector, the proportion of private/independent school students increased from 6.9% in 2013/2014 to 7.4% in 2017/2018.

By comparison, the proportion of public school students decreased from 92.6% to 92.0% during the same period.

The remaining 0.6% of Canadian students were home-schooled in 2017/2018. Yukon (3.0%), Manitoba (1.8%) and Alberta (1.8%) had the highest proportion of home-schooled students. Home-schooling is an alternative method of learning that takes place outside the school environment, where parents deliver courses and programs of learning to their children. Although home-schooling represents a small proportion of enrolments, their number has been trending upwards in recent years.



Table 1
Number and proportion of students in elementary and secondary schools, by school type, Canada, provinces and territories, 2017/2018

	Public schools		Private/independent schools		Home-schooling	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Canada¹	5,159,919	92.0	414,651	7.4	34,437	0.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	65,283	98.2	1,077	1.6	117	0.2
Prince Edward Island	20,187	97.6	339	1.6	165	0.8
Nova Scotia	118,962	95.9	3,975	3.2	1,053	0.8
New Brunswick	97,755	98.0	1,218	1.2	801	0.8
Quebec ²	1,216,791	90.2	129,186	9.6	3,303	0.2
Ontario ³	2,020,251	92.9	146,340	6.7	7,365	0.3
Manitoba ⁴	184,707	91.2	14,199	7.0	3,639	1.8
Saskatchewan ⁵	182,640	96.1	4,830	2.5	2,481	1.3
Alberta	665,871	94.1	28,485	4.0	13,023	1.8
British Columbia ⁵	563,244	86.6	84,999	13.1	2,256	0.3
Yukon	5,391	97.0	...	...	168	3.0
Northwest Territories	8,733	99.2	...	...	66	0.8
Nunavut ⁶	10,107	100.0	...	...	.	.

. not available for any reference period

... not applicable

1. The Canada totals reflect data from the reporting provinces and territories.

2. Quebec includes general programs for adults and vocational programs in addition to regular programs for youth.

3. The Ontario home-schooling data were not available for 2017/2018, thus the 2016/2017 data were used as an estimate.

4. Manitoba counts its students in Catholic schools under "private/independent schools."

5. Saskatchewan and British Columbia include general programs for adults in addition to regular programs for youth.

6. Nunavut includes its counts for students in home-schooling (typically less than 10) under "public schools."

Note(s): Counts represent the number of students enrolled in programs at the beginning of the school year (in September or as close as possible thereafter). All numbers, including the totals, have been randomly rounded; therefore, totals may not add up to the sum of all categories due to rounding. Calculations were done using unrounded data. Data are subject to revision.

Source(s): Table 37-10-0109-01.

Over 250,000 public school students enrolled in education programs for official language minorities

All provinces and territories offer education programs for the official language minority communities (French outside Quebec, English in Quebec). In 2017/2018, 250,899 students in public schools were enrolled in such programs.

According to the 2016 Census, 3.1% of Canadians aged 5 to 18 outside Quebec had French as their first official language spoken. In 2017/2018, 4.2% of students in public schools outside Quebec were learning in French through education programs for official language minorities. New Brunswick had the highest proportion of its students enrolled in these programs at 29.6%. In the remaining provinces and territories, this proportion ranged from 0.5% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 5.4% in Ontario.

In Quebec, where French is the language of the majority of the population, 6.9% of public school students were learning in English through education programs for official language minorities. According to the 2016 Census, 13.6% of the population aged 5 to 18 in Quebec had English as their first official language spoken.

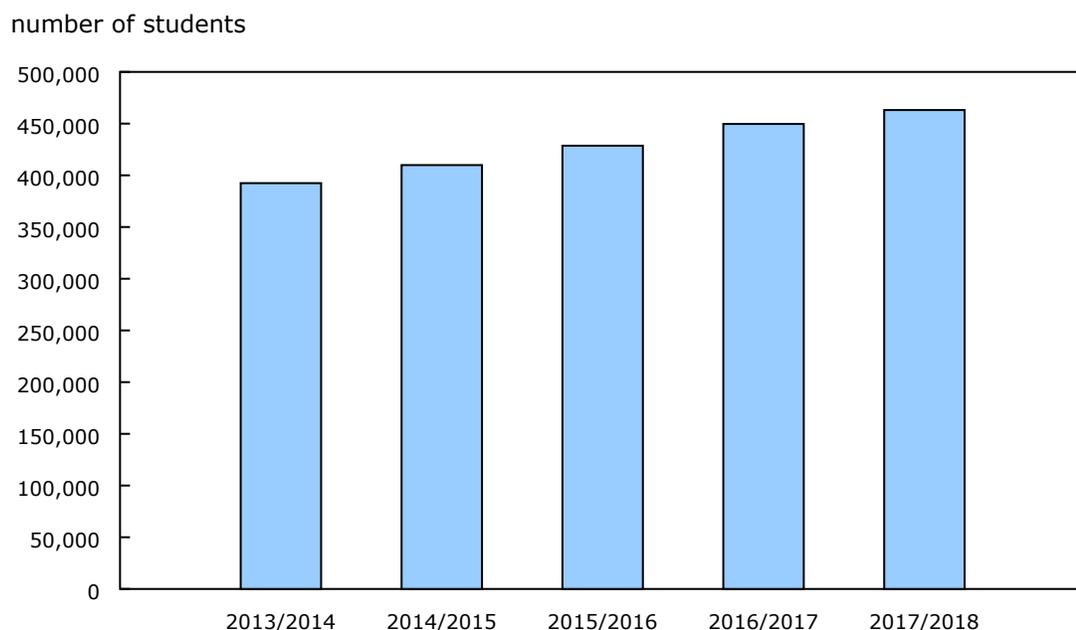
Rising enrolments in second official language programs in public schools

In 2017/2018, just under half of the students in public schools across Canada (2,449,842) were learning a second official language, a proportion that has remained relatively constant in recent years. This group includes students learning French or English through regular second language programs, as well as students enrolled in French immersion programs.

Most students learning a second official language (1,986,726) were enrolled in regular second language programs, up 1.4% from the previous school year.

The remaining students (463,119) were enrolled in French immersion programs, up 3.0% compared with the 2016/2017 school year. The percentage increase in these enrolments outpaced the growth of public school enrolments in 7 of the 11 jurisdictions that provide data on French immersion programs.

Chart 1 Enrolments in French immersion programs, public elementary and secondary schools, Canada



Note(s): Quebec and Nunavut do not report enrolments in French immersion programs.
Source(s): Table 37-10-0009-01.

Over a five-year period, the proportion of public school students enrolled in French immersion rose from 10.2% in 2013/2014 to 11.8% in 2017/2018. Prince Edward Island (25.2%) and New Brunswick (23.3%) had the highest proportions of students in French immersion.

The types of official languages programs offered in public schools, as well as the points at which students may enroll in these programs, differ by province/territory.

Little change in the number of high school graduates

In 2017/2018, 379,893 students graduated from high schools in Canada, down 0.6% from a year earlier. This change was driven by a decrease (-0.8%) in the number of students who graduated from public high schools who comprise around 90% of all graduates. On the other hand, graduates from private/independent schools increased 1.6% during the same period. As with enrolment counts, variations in the graduate counts reflect fluctuations in the school-aged population. For example, student enrolments in the last grade of high school in public schools decreased by 0.5% in 2017/2018 from the previous year.

While the ESES cannot be used to calculate high school graduation rates, a Statistics Canada [study](#) exploring high school graduation rates showed that 88% of Canadian students graduated high school within five years after starting grade 10 ("Secondary 3" in Quebec).

Table 2
Number of high school graduates,¹ by school type, Canada,² 2016/2017 and 2017/2018

	2016/2017	2017/2018	2016/2017 to 2017/2018
	number		% change
Total, school type	382,038	379,893	-0.6
Public schools	344,127	341,388	-0.8
Private/independent schools ³	37,911	38,505	1.6

1. In addition to regular programs for youth, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia include graduates from general programs for adults. Quebec includes graduates from general programs for adults and vocational programs.

2. Counts for "private/independent schools" exclude Nova Scotia (data not available) and the territories (no private/independent schools).

3. Manitoba counts its graduates from Catholic schools under "private/independent schools."

Note(s): Counts represent the number of first-time high school graduates, as provided by the provinces and territories. All numbers, including the totals, have been randomly rounded; therefore, totals may not add up to the sum of all categories due to rounding. Calculations were done using unrounded data. Data are subject to revision.

Source(s): Table [37-10-0111-01](#).

Note to readers

The data presented in this release are from the Elementary–Secondary Education Survey (ESES). The ESES is an annual survey that collects aggregate data from each provincial/territorial ministry or department of education. The 2017/2018 ESES, conducted in 2019, collected data for five school years: 2013/2014 to 2017/2018.

The enrolment counts represent data for programs in Canada's public and private/independent elementary and secondary schools, and also for home-schooled students, as provided by the provinces and territories. The number of students represents those enrolled in elementary–secondary programs at the beginning of the school year (in September or as close as possible thereafter).

The increase in the student-aged population is based on population estimates in table [17-10-0005-01](#).

Census figures on the first official language spoken of the population aged 5 to 18 are based on a custom tabulation.

The graduate counts represent first-time graduates from secondary schools (both public and private/independent). Graduates from home-schooled programs are included in either the public or in the private/independent graduate counts. In 2017/2018, nine provinces reported high school graduates from private/independent schools.

The territories do not have any private/independent schools.

Public schools are publicly funded elementary and secondary schools that are operated by school boards or the province or territory.

Private/independent schools encompass elementary and secondary schools that are operated, managed and administered by private individuals and/or groups (for example, a church, a trade union or a business enterprise, or a foreign or international agency) or that have a governing board that exercises powers similar to those of a board of education and consists mostly of members not selected by a public agency.

The extent to which an institution receives funding from public or private sources does not determine its classification as a public or private/independent school for the ESES. Privately managed schools may be subject to some regulation or control by public authorities, but these institutions are nevertheless classified as private/independent, provided that they are ultimately subject to private control. Public regulation may extend to areas such as curriculum, staffing appointments, admissions policies, and other matters. The ESES does not distinguish between government-dependent private and independent private institutions.

Home-schooling is an alternative method of learning that takes place outside the public or private/independent school environment. Parents choosing home-schooling have the primary responsibility of managing, delivering and supervising their children's courses and programs of learning. Although home-schooling students may be associated with a public or private/independent school, the enrolment counts for home-schooling are reported separately.

Any detailed comparisons between the provinces and territories must be undertaken with caution. Reporting by type of school varies across jurisdictions. For example, Manitoba includes its students in Catholic schools under "private/independent schools," and Nunavut includes its counts for students in home-schooling (typically less than 10) under "public schools." Reporting by program type also varies across jurisdictions. While all provinces and territories report students in regular programs for youth, a few also report students in general programs for adults and/or vocational programs. Data on public school students enrolled in or graduating from regular programs for youth are available in tables [37-10-0007-01](#), [37-10-0008-01](#), and [37-10-0019-01](#). Data for students enrolled in or graduating from all schools and programs are available in tables [37-10-0109-01](#) and [37-10-0111-01](#).

Public school enrolments in official languages programs, as reported by the provinces and territories, are presented for students in the following three programs. "French immersion programs" are programs where French is the language of instruction for students attending English schools. "Regular second language programs (or core language programs)" are programs where French is taught to students attending English schools outside Quebec, or programs where English is taught to students attending French schools in Quebec, as a subject in the regular course offerings. "Education programs for official language minorities" (or First official language programs for the linguistic minority) are programs for students from the official language minority of each province or territory (French outside Quebec, English in Quebec). These programs allow children in the linguistic minority to pursue their education in their first official language. Data on these official languages programs are available in table [37-10-0009-01](#).

All numbers, including the totals, have been randomly rounded; therefore, sums of the values for the provinces/territories may not add up to the total counts for Canada. Calculations were done using unrounded values. All data are subject to revision.

Available tables: [37-10-0007-01](#) to [37-10-0009-01](#) , [37-10-0019-01](#), [37-10-0078-01](#), [37-10-0109-01](#), [37-10-0111-01](#) and [37-10-0153-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5102](#).

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; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).