

Elementary–Secondary Education Survey, 2019/2020

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, October 14, 2021

Over 5.7 million students in Canada were enrolled in elementary and secondary school programs in 2019/2020. These students were attending public schools, private/independent schools, or were home-schooled.

In the same school year, over 380,000 students graduated from Canadian high schools in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of this global pandemic, students experienced significant changes to their educational instruction, with most students learning remotely at the end of the 2019/2020 school year. Data collected by the Elementary–Secondary Education Survey (ESES) represent the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year. Results from the next cycle of the ESES, to be released in fall 2022, will provide more information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on elementary–secondary enrolments for the 2020/2021 school year.

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

Enrolments in private/independent schools continue to grow

The vast majority of students (91.8%) in Canada attended public schools in 2019/2020, while 7.6% of students attended private/independent schools. Similar to previous years, British Columbia (13.1%) and Quebec (9.8%) had the highest proportion of their students attending private/independent schools.

From 2018/2019 to 2019/2020, private/independent school enrolments rose by 1.7%, compared with a 0.8% increase for the school-aged population. During this period, the increase in public school enrolments (0.8%) was closely aligned with population growth.

Enrolments in private/independent schools have been increasing at a higher rate than both the school-aged population and public school enrolments every year since 2015/2016.

The remaining students (0.7%) were home-schooled during the 2019/2020 school year. This proportion has remained relatively stable in recent years. Home-schooling is an alternative method of learning outside the school environment where parents deliver courses and instructional programs to their children. It does not include distance learning or online learning, which are provided by schools.

Little change in the number of high school graduates

In 2019/2020, there were 381,156 students who graduated from high schools in Canada, amid the uncertainty of the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. In spite of widespread school closures and lockdowns, the number of students who graduated at the end of the 2019/2020 school year was similar to the previous school year, when 384,204 students graduated.

While the ESES data cannot be used to calculate high school graduation rates, the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP), another Statistics Canada program, has developed a true-cohort methodology to calculate graduation rates. Data from the PCEIP reveal that in 2017/2018, 81% of high school students graduated within three years after starting grade 10 (and "Secondary 3" in Quebec), while 89% graduated within five years. For more information, please refer to "[Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective, 2020.](#)"



Table 1
Number and proportion of students in elementary and secondary schools, by school type, Canada, provinces and territories, 2019/2020

	Public schools		Private/independent schools		Home-schooling	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Canada¹	5,254,992	91.8	433,152	7.6	37,287	0.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	63,570	98.2	1,035	1.6	153	0.2
Prince Edward Island	20,733	96.9	474	2.2	195	0.9
Nova Scotia	123,240	95.9	4,179	3.3	1,137	0.9
New Brunswick	98,967	97.8	1,272	1.3	942	0.9
Quebec ²	1,234,254	89.9	134,331	9.8	4,308	0.3
Ontario	2,056,059	92.8	153,291	6.9	6,564	0.3
Manitoba ³	187,893	91.3	14,325	7.0	3,690	1.8
Saskatchewan ⁴	186,066	95.7	5,523	2.8	2,778	1.4
Alberta	683,280	93.7	31,503	4.3	14,730	2.0
British Columbia ⁴	576,000	86.5	87,225	13.1	2,454	0.4
Yukon	5,637	96.8	...	...	186	3.2
Northwest Territories	8,568	98.2	...	...	153	1.8
Nunavut ⁵	10,725	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. Manitoba counts its students in Catholic schools under "private/independent schools."

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

5. 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.

Table 2
Number of high school graduates,¹ by school type, Canada,² 2018/2019 and 2019/2020

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2018/2019 to 2019/2020
	number	number	% change
Total, school type	384,204	381,156	-0.8
Public schools	343,812	339,900	-1.1
Private/independent schools ³	40,392	41,253	2.1

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 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 2019/2020 ESES, conducted in 2021, collected data for five school years: 2015/2016 to 2019/2020.

The enrolment counts represent data for programs in Canada's public and private/independent elementary and secondary schools, as well as 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), hence, any effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on enrolment data is minimal.

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

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 the private/independent graduate counts. In 2019/2020, 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 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.

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.

All numbers, including the totals, have been randomly rounded; therefore, sums of the values for the provinces and 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](#), [37-10-0153-01](#), [37-10-0173-01](#) to [37-10-0179-01](#) , [37-10-0213-01](#) and [37-10-0214-01](#).

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).