

Public Sector Universe, 2020

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The contribution of public sector institutions is vital to the social and economic well-being of Canadians. Together, these institutions support the generation and redistribution of income and wealth, offering a wide array of essential services such as health, education, public order and safety, and economic affairs.

The Public Sector Universe (PSU) is a comprehensive list of institutional units that define the coverage of Canadian macroeconomic statistics, including the [Canadian Government Finance Statistics \(CGFS\)](#), which were also released today. The list of reporting entities is an essential input into the compilation and dissemination of detailed and meaningful CGFS and the Canadian Classification of Functions of Government. It is a key element in understanding and reconciling these with fiscal data published by governments.

The public sector consists of all resident institutional units controlled by resident government units, which includes all units of the general government sector and resident government business enterprises (GBEs), commonly referred to as public corporations. It is comprised of over 6,150 active units as of this release.

Sector classification decisions of public sector entities now available on the [Public Sector Universe Tool](#)

This year, for the first time, Statistics Canada will progressively release detailed information on the methodology used for the sector classification of Canadian public sector entities using a standardized template.

The classification criteria are based on internationally recognized standards of macroeconomic statistics and include the concepts of residence, institutional unit, control and market or non-market production. The methodology is thus harmonized with the prescriptions of the Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014, developed by the International Monetary Fund, as well as the 2008 System of National Accounts.

The classification decisions will serve to enhance the transparency of the sector classification process of entities and to enrich the content of the CGFS program's metadata.

At first glance, the size of the PSU appears substantial but the relevance of each of these institutions holds importance. Government involvement in the health, education and social services sectors is controlled primarily at the provincial-territorial level and fulfils key functions of government operations in the general interest of society. The nature and range of industries in which the public sector is involved underlines its economic breadth and influence in Canada.



Table 1
Number of active Canadian public sector units, by sector and jurisdiction, 2020

	Federal government	Provincial-territorial governments	Universities and colleges	Health institutions	Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan	Local governments	Local school boards
number of active units							
Newfoundland and Labrador	0	32	3	5	0	289	2
Prince Edward Island	0	21	3	2	0	64	2
Nova Scotia	2	33	12	4	0	81	9
New Brunswick	1	40	11	4	0	128	0
Quebec	6	109	81	38	1	1,387	72
Ontario	37	61	79	137	1	499	84
Manitoba	3	43	13	13	0	137	37
Saskatchewan	0	76	23	5	0	803	27
Alberta	1	47	32	2	0	436	76
British Columbia	6	45	35	14	0	432	60
Yukon	0	8	1	2	0	8	0
Northwest Territories	1	13	1	3	0	23	2
Nunavut	5	34	1	1	0	25	0
Total	62	562	295	230	2	4,312	371
number of active units							
	Federal government business enterprises		Provincial-territorial government business enterprises		Local government business enterprises		Total general government and government business enterprises
Newfoundland and Labrador	2		5		1		339
Prince Edward Island	0		8		1		101
Nova Scotia	1		9		8		159
New Brunswick	2		5		6		197
Quebec	7		14		19		1,734
Ontario	13		13		102		1,026
Manitoba	1		6		2		255
Saskatchewan	1		10		5		950
Alberta	0		6		44		644
British Columbia	4		8		9		613
Yukon	0		3		1		23
Northwest Territories	0		3		0		46
Nunavut	0		3		0		69
Total	31		93		198		6,156

Source(s): Calculations are based on data from *Public Sector Universe* (68-516-X).

The distribution of public sector entities can be viewed from sectoral, provincial-territorial and industrial dimensions.

In 2020, there were very few changes in the counts of the PSU and so the distribution from the various dimensions in terms of percentages brought almost no changes. However, the number of municipalities decreased in Prince Edward Island following an amalgamation in rural communities.

From the total number of units (6,156) in the public sector in 2020, the largest representation of public institutional units was related to local governments (municipalities) and school boards (76% or 4,683 units), followed by provincial-territorial governments (9% or 562 units). Federal, provincial-territorial and local GBEs represented 5% (322 units) of the public sector, while federal government, universities, colleges, health institutions and the Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan made up the remaining portion (10% or 589 units).

Table 2
Overview of Canada's public sector, 2020

	Federal government (A)	Provincial-territorial governments (B)	Local governments (C)	Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan (D)	Consolidation (E)	General government (F)=A+B+C+D+E
% of GDP						
Transactions						
Revenue	15.2	23.1	9.0	3.9	-10.1	41.0
Expense	27.6	26.3	8.1	3.3	-10.1	55.2
Net operating balance	-12.4	-3.2	0.8	0.5	0.0	-14.2
Stocks						
Assets	27.5	62.6	27.4	31.5	-9.2	139.9
Non-financial	3.8	27.5	20.8	0.0	0.0	52.1
Financial	23.7	35.1	6.6	31.5	-9.2	87.8
Liabilities	66.4	61.1	8.5	4.7	-9.2	131.5
Net financial worth	-42.7	-26.0	-1.8	26.9	0.0	-43.7
Net worth	-38.9	1.5	18.9	26.9	0.0	8.4
number of units						
Number of units	62	1,087	4,683	2	...	5,834
Government business enterprises (G) Consolidation (H) Public sector (I)=F+G+H						
% of GDP						
Transactions						
Revenue			6.9		-2.6	45.3
Expense			7.0		-2.6	59.6
Net operating balance			-0.1		0.0	-14.3
Stocks						
Assets			71.1		-43.5	167.5
Nonfinancial			12.5		0.0	64.5
Financial			58.7		-43.5	102.9
Liabilities			69.6		-43.5	157.5
Net financial worth			-10.9		0.0	-54.6
Net worth			1.6		0.0	9.9
number of units						
Number of units			322		...	6,156

... not applicable

Note(s):

GDP stands for gross domestic product.

The figures for Canada's public sector were derived by consolidating the major transactions and debtor-creditor relationships among the general government units and the government business enterprises. In this table, provincial and territorial governments include universities, colleges and health institutions. Local government includes school boards.

Source(s): Tables [36-10-0222-01](#), [10-10-0016-01](#), [10-10-0017-01](#), [10-10-0020-01](#), [10-10-0022-01](#), [10-10-0147-01](#), [10-10-0023-01](#).

Governments weigh heavily on the Canadian economy and this is reflected in the main CGFS aggregates expressed in percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP). The size of general government in Canada is attributable in large part to extensive social protection programs combined with the universal health care and public education systems.

The consolidated general government recorded a historic deficit in 2020 which amounted to 14.2% of GDP, a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Total public sector expenses stood at nearly 60% of GDP in 2020, up sharply from around 40% in 2019. The level of spending by the federal government (27.6% of GDP) alone has exceptionally exceeded that of provincial and territorial governments, as has the level of debt (total liabilities).

GBEs also play an important role in the Canadian economy and represent an extension of government fiscal policy. In particular, they provide key goods to the community and manage some government strategic assets and liabilities. This year, Canadian GBEs have seen their financial assets (58.7% of GDP) and liabilities (69.6% of GDP) increase by almost 20% of GDP to a record high. This increase was primarily due to unprecedented financial and monetary support measures conducted by the Bank of Canada during the pandemic, in particular through large purchases of federal debt securities. At the end of the reference period, the Bank held about 33% of federal treasury bills and bonds outstanding.

Table 3
Number of active Canadian public sector government business enterprises, by industry, 2020

	Federal	Provincial–territorial	Local	Total by industry
	number of active enterprises			
Industry				
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	0	1	0	1
Utilities	0	14	121	135
Construction	0	1	0	1
Manufacturing	2	2	0	4
Wholesale trade	1	0	0	1
Retail trade	0	15	0	15
Transportation and warehousing	21	10	71	102
Information and cultural industries	0	1	6	7
Finance and insurance	6	11	0	17
Real estate and rental and leasing	1	14	0	15
Professional, scientific and technical services	0	2	0	2
Management of companies and enterprises	0	1	0	1
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0	1	0	1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	0	19	0	19
Accommodation and food services	0	1	0	1
Total	31	93	198	322

Source(s): Calculations are based on data from *Public Sector Universe* (68-516-X).

Besides public administration, public sector entities in Canada were active in various industries such as utilities (e.g., hydro), retail trade (e.g., liquor authorities and cannabis stores), transportation (e.g., ports), finance (e.g., deposit insurance), leasing (convention centres) and recreation (nature parks).

Linking the PSU with government finance statistics allows for a useful analysis. For example, in 2020, nearly 60% of all revenues (\$166 billion) reported by GBEs in Canada were accounted for by the 93 provincially and territorially controlled GBEs (\$99 billion), with utility enterprises recording more than \$44 billion in revenue alone.

GBEs controlled by local (municipal) governments were by far the most numerous (198, or 61% of all GBEs) generating 20% (\$34 billion) of total GBE revenue. Local GBEs are active primarily in utilities and public transit industries.

Federal GBEs generated around the same revenue (\$34 billion) as local GBEs despite the fact that there are only 31 federal enterprises. Federal GBEs generated slightly over half (\$19 billion) of their revenue from finance and insurance activities (e.g., Bank of Canada or the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation), with another \$11 billion generated by the transportation industry. This was related to operating VIA Rail and port authorities throughout Canada.

Note to readers

The 2020 list of entities in the public sector universe (PSU) is now available. This year's product presents public sector units from 2008 to 2020.

For more in-depth information about the institutional coverage of the Canadian public sector and the methodology pertaining to the sector classification of public entities please refer to the paper "[Best practices for Defining the Canadian public sector](#)".

Canada's public sector—governments and business enterprises they control—provides information on the thousands of institutional units present throughout Canada, including the legal name of the unit, date of entry into or exit from the public sector, and geographical perspectives. This list of institutional units constitutes the universe from which Statistics Canada presents the measurement of Canadian government finance statistics.

An institutional unit is defined as an economic entity that is capable- in its own right- of owning assets, incurring liabilities, and engaging in economic activities and in transactions with other entities.

Ministries, departments, agencies, boards, commissions, judicial authorities, legislative bodies and other entities that make up a government are not institutional units if they do not have the authority to own assets, incur liabilities or engage in transactions in their own right. In general, all entities funded by appropriations made in accordance with a budget controlled by the legislature are not separate institutional units and are treated as constituting a single institutional unit. Government business enterprises are government controlled, public financial and non-financial corporations engaged in commercial operations involving the sale of goods and services to the public in the market place at economically significant prices.

The last component of Canada's PSU (Indigenous governments) will be introduced in future releases of the PSU list.

Calculations as a percentage of GDP are based on the nominal GDP at market prices, expenditure-based, estimates for Canada, the provinces and the territories, available in Table [36-10-0222-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5218](#).

The publication *Public Sector Universe* ([68-516-X](#)) is now available in HTML format.

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).