

Study: High school graduation in British Columbia from 2010/2011 to 2018/2019: A focus on special needs status

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Graduating from high school is an important milestone that marks the end of mandatory education and the transition into adulthood with the option of further education. However, high school graduation rates vary among youth because of individual, family or other life factors. Graduating from high school and successfully transitioning into adulthood may be especially challenging for students with special needs because of various difficulties or barriers they may face in their daily lives.

The study "[Graduation of High School Students in British Columbia from 2010/2011 to 2018/2019: A Focus on Special Needs Status](#)" looks at high school graduation proportions among Grade 12 students aged 15 to 19 years in British Columbia with and without special needs over a nine-year period.

This study uses British Columbia Ministry of Education administrative data on student enrolment in public and independent schools across the province, including students' individual characteristics, such as sex, age and their progression throughout the education system. These data are then integrated with the T1 Family File to obtain information on parental income, which is known to be related to high school graduation and academic achievement.

The study looks at high school graduation proportions among special needs students across seven categories: students with gifted status, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), behavioural needs or mental illness, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, physical needs and sensory needs. These graduation proportions are then compared with those of students without special needs.

The study found that there were more male than female students with special needs (excluding students with gifted status). For example, among students with ASD, about 8 in 10 were males. In contrast, among students without special needs, the share of males and females was similar.

Students with special needs (excluding students with gifted status) were less likely to graduate high school. However, there was diversity among the different special needs categories. For example, students with learning disabilities (about 9 in 10) and those with sensory needs (about 8 to 9 in 10) were most likely to graduate from high school, while students with intellectual disabilities (6 to 7 in 10) were least likely.

When comparing the proportions of students graduating at age 18 years or younger with the proportions of students graduating at age 19 years, the proportions were higher at age 19 years. The differences were slightly larger among students with special needs (5 to 10 percentage points) compared with those without special needs (3 to 7 percentage points). The largest age differences were observed among students with ASD, behavioural needs or mental illness, and physical needs.

After accounting for individual characteristics, family background and academic achievement, students with gifted status were more likely to graduate from high school than those without special needs.

Conversely, compared with students without special needs, those with intellectual disabilities had the lowest high school graduation proportions, followed by those with behavioural or mental illness and those with physical needs. These results reveal the importance of disaggregating data and considering diversity among students with special needs.

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The study "[Graduation of High School Students in British Columbia from 2010/2011 to 2018/2019: A Focus on Special Needs Status](#)," part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series (11F0019M)*, is now available.

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) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).