

# Elementary–Secondary Education Survey for Canada, the provinces and territories, 2016/2017

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Over 5.5 million students in Canada were enrolled in elementary and secondary school programs in 2016/2017. This includes public schools, private/independent schools and home-schooling.

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

## **Over 5.5 million students enrolled in elementary and secondary school programs**

The number of students in Canada's elementary–secondary programs (public schools, private/independent schools and home-schooling) totalled 5,553,522 in 2016/2017. Children in Canada are required by law to attend school from the age of 5 or 6, until the age of 16 or 18 (the age varies by province/territory). Variations in the total enrolment counts reflect fluctuations in the school-aged population, including age group populations and number of students per grade.

## **Vast majority of students attend public schools**

The vast majority of students (92.1%) attended public schools, and their number in 2016/2017 increased by 1.0% from the previous school year.

In the same school year, 7.2% attended private/independent schools in Canada. British Columbia (13.0%) and Quebec (9.5%) had the highest proportions of their students attending these schools.

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

Enrolments in private/independent schools, which have been increasing steadily in recent years, rose 2.0% from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017.

In Canada, 0.6% of students (totaling 34,413) were home-schooled in 2016/2017. Yukon (2.8%), Alberta (1.8%), and Manitoba (1.7%) 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, the number of students in these programs rose by 10.1% from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017.

## **Proportion of students in private/independent sector has increased over the past five years**

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 has increased from 6.8% in 2012/2013 to 7.2% in 2016/2017. Conversely, the proportion of public school students has decreased from 92.7% to 92.1% during the same period.



**Table 1**  
**Number and proportion of students in elementary and secondary schools, by school type,**  
**Canada, provinces and territories, 2016/2017**

	Public schools		Private/independent schools		Home-schooling	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Canada<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>5,117,328</b>	<b>92.1</b>	<b>401,784</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>34,413</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	66,183	98.3	1,005	1.5	138	0.2
Prince Edward Island	20,007	97.7	276	1.4	189	0.9
Nova Scotia	118,566	96.3	3,603	2.9	948	0.8
New Brunswick	97,842	98.1	1,134	1.1	759	0.8
Quebec <sup>2</sup>	1,210,698	90.3	128,043	9.5	2,565	0.2
Ontario <sup>3</sup>	2,006,703	93.2	138,324	6.4	8,754	0.4
Manitoba <sup>4</sup>	183,015	91.4	13,815	6.9	3,393	1.7
Saskatchewan <sup>5</sup>	180,696	96.3	4,575	2.4	2,379	1.3
Alberta	652,272	94.2	27,534	4.0	12,729	1.8
British Columbia <sup>5</sup>	557,625	86.7	83,469	13.0	2,316	0.4
Yukon	5,343	97.2	...	...	153	2.8
Northwest Territories	8,337	99.0	...	...	84	1.0
Nunavut <sup>6</sup>	10,041	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 2016/2017, thus they were estimated by Statistics Canada.

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, sums of the individual values may not match the totals. Data are subject to revision.

**Source(s):** Elementary-Secondary Education Survey.

## Enrolments in French immersion programs in public schools rise again

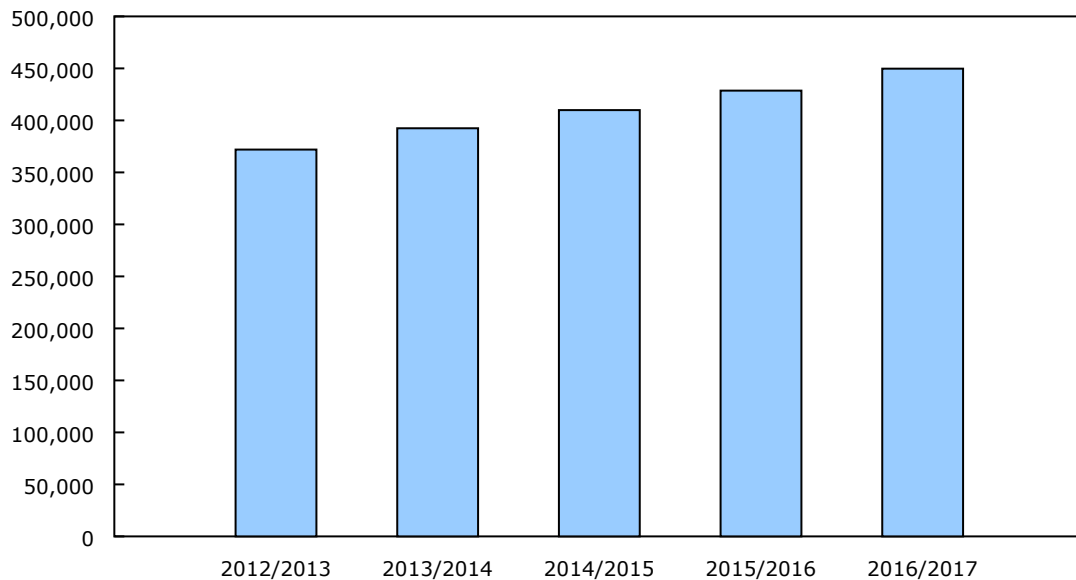
Just under half of the students in public schools across Canada (2,409,702) were learning a second official language in 2016/2017. Among these students, the majority (1,959,954) were enrolled in regular second language programs (core programs with English or French as a subject), up slightly (+0.3%) from the previous school year. The remaining 449,745 students were enrolled in French immersion programs, up 4.9% compared with the 2015/2016 school year, and following a trend of steady annual increases in recent years.

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

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number of students



**Note(s):** Quebec and Nunavut do not report enrolments in French immersion programs.

**Source(s):** Table 37-10-0009-01.

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Overall, 11 provinces and territories reported students enrolled in French immersion programs. For these jurisdictions, the proportion of public school students enrolled in French immersion programs has increased steadily over the past five years, from 9.6% in 2012/2013 to 11.5% in 2016/2017. Prince Edward Island (25.4%) and New Brunswick (20.5%) had the highest proportion of French immersion students.

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

### Little change in the number of high school graduates

In 2016/2017, 379,344 students graduated from high schools in Canada, down 0.6% from a year earlier.

As with enrolment counts, variations in the graduate counts reflect fluctuations in the school-aged population, including age group populations and number of students per grade.

Even though the number of public high school graduates decreased by 0.9% in 2016/2017 compared with the previous year, they still accounted for 90% of the total high school graduates.

For the same period, 37,566 students graduated from private/independent high schools, up 1.8% from a year earlier.

**Table 2**  
**Number of high school graduates<sup>1</sup>, by school type, Canada<sup>2</sup>, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017**

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2015/2016 to 2016/2017
	number		% change
<b>Total, school type</b>	<b>381,612</b>	<b>379,344</b>	<b>-0.6</b>
Public schools	344,724	341,778	-0.9
Private/Independent schools <sup>3</sup>	36,888	37,566	1.8

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, sums of the individual values may not match the totals. 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 2016/2017 ESES, conducted in 2018, collected data for five school years: 2012/2013 to 2016/2017.

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 graduate counts represent first-time graduates from secondary schools (both public and private/independent). Graduates from home-schooled programs are either included in the public or in the private/independent graduate counts. In 2016/2017, 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. 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 should be reported separately.

Any detailed comparisons between the provinces and territories must be considered 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 "French immersion programs" and "Regular second language programs (or core language 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. Information on "First official language programs for the linguistic minority" is also collected; that is, enrolments in 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 language programs are available in table 37-10-0009-01.

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

Available tables: [37-10-0007-01](#) to [37-10-0010-01](#) , [37-10-0019-01](#), [37-10-0078-01](#), [37-10-0109-01](#) and [37-10-0111-01](#).

**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](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).